

**B V**

4655

.J4

426  
Library of Congress.

Chap. BV4655

Shelf .J4

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.











*“ THE WAY OF RIGHTEOUSNESS : ”*

OR,

# EXPOSITORY LECTURES

ON THE

## TEN COMMANDMENTS.

---

J  
BY

JOHN JEFFERSON.

---

“ In the way of righteousness is life ; and in the path-way thereof there is no death.”—Prov. xii. 28.

17

---

LONDON:

T. WARD & Co. 27, PATERNOSTER ROW.

---

1835.

BV4655

.J4

A. G. HARDY, PRINTER,  
PLEASANT-ROW, ISLINGTON.

## PREFACE.

---

THE following Lectures were delivered in the ordinary course of public ministry, and are published as nearly as practicable in the form in which they were preached. The design was that of simple and practical exposition; and beyond this the Author has not attempted to proceed. A great degree of similarity unavoidably characterized the reflections at the close of each Lecture; these have therefore been suppressed, and some brief general deductions introduced at the end of the course. The Author takes this means respectfully to acknowledge the kindness of those friends, who as subscribers for the book have warranted its publication.

STOKE NEWINGTON,

*May 1, 1835.*





# CONTENTS.

---

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION .....	1
THE FIRST COMMANDMENT .....	22
THE SECOND COMMANDMENT .....	42
THE THIRD COMMANDMENT .....	58
THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT .....	78
THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT .....	102
THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT .....	128
THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT .....	146
THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT .....	159
THE NINTH COMMANDMENT .....	174
THE TENTH COMMANDMENT .....	188
CONCLUSION .....	196

*Lately, by the same Author.*

A TREATISE on the OFFICIAL GLORY of the  
SON of GOD. Cloth boards. 12mo. 5s.

Also,

A COMPANION for the CLOSET; or, The WAY to  
KEEP the HEART RIGHT with GOD. 18mo. 3s.

And,

EMINENT USEFULNESS assured of a GLORIOUS  
REWARD; A Sermon occasioned by the Death of the  
Rev. ROBERT MORRISON, D.D. 8vo. 1s.

May be had of the Author, and of WARD & Co.,  
27, Paternoster Row.

THE  
INTRODUCTION, OR PREFACE,  
TO THE  
TEN COMMANDMENTS.

---

THAT there is an infinitely glorious Being, whose existence is underived and eternal ; in other words, that there is a God, few have ever denied. For, however ignorant men may be of his character, or careless respecting his claims, the regions of Atheism are too cold and gloomy to be deliberately chosen as the retreat of their intelligent nature, either from the dissatisfaction that is felt with present circumstances, or the compunctions which are excited by present sinfulness. Equally general is the admission of his universal government. The notions which prevail amongst men as to its character and principles may be very erroneous, their sense of obligation to submit to its claims very defective, and their reluctance to receive the volume of Scripture as the authoritative guide of their sentiments and practice very great ; but the doctrine itself is too obviously implied in his necessary existence, infinite perfection, and creating power, not to be at once perceived as true, and

felt as important. To this universal sense of the being and supremacy of God, retained in all ages and amidst all corruptions, and ever bursting out to view even in the polytheism and superstitions of the heathen, the revealed will of God every where appeals. It assumes the fact of his existence; implies the doctrine of his universal government; and proceeds to make known to men the precepts of his will, that they may form their character and regulate their conduct in obedience thereto. This doctrine of moral obligation is implied in the very existence of the Bible, yea, in the fact of revelation whether written or oral; its principles and expressions are the objects of our present inquiry.

The introduction or preface to the Ten Commandments, is a specimen of those appeals which are made to men as the subjects of Divine government.

*“ And God spake all these words, saying, I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.”*  
Exodus xx. 1, 2.

This declaration of the Divine glory was evidently designed to excite attention to the subsequent announcement of his will, and to shew the grounds on which the obligations of men to obey are founded. Our first object, therefore, must be to inquire into the nature and grounds of moral obligation.

Moral obligation differs altogether from physical constraint; it implies an end to be gained, certain means to be employed in order to that



end, and an established connexion between the one and the other ; and it proceeds on the assumption of supreme authority in God, and accountable intelligence in man. The end contemplated is the happiness of man in the fulfilment of the design of his creation ; and whether he be viewed as a creature or a sinner, if he would gain this end, he must use the means which God has appointed.

The authority that enjoins obedience is supreme ; it is that of the Governor of the universe. He proposes the end to be gained, and determines the means of its attainment. The infinite disparity between the creature and the Creator renders it impossible that they should meet on equal terms to discuss the propriety of an obligatory arrangement. The supremacy of Jehovah both in greatness and goodness, gives Him a right to rule over all, which none may dispute, and the particular requirements of which none can alter or set aside ; whilst the dependence and comparative insignificance of the creatures, render it imperative on them to receive with thankfulness, and obey with promptitude, all the intimations of his will. This is plainly implied in the assertion of his authority which introduced the Decalogue : in it he declares his essential, infinite, eternal glory, as having life in himself, and giving being to all others ; and he claims obedience on this ground : “ I am Jehovah ; ” “ I AM *that* I AM ; this is my name for ever, and my memorial unto all generations ; ” “ Ye shall, therefore, keep my statutes and my judgments ; which if a man do he shall live in them.”—He declares his special relations to his

creatures, and on this ground further invokes attention to his claims: "I am Jehovah, *thy God*." He is the Creator of all, and appeals to his creatures; the sustainer of all, and appeals to those who are wholly dependent on Him; the Preserver of all, and appeals to those for whom he provides, and over whom he watches. "Know ye, that the Lord he is God; it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture." "Ye shall do my judgments, and keep mine ordinances to walk therein; I am the Lord your God."—He declares further the special deliverance he had wrought for the Israelites, and thus teaches us that the natural obligation of men to love and serve God is strengthened by all his special interpositions for their welfare: "I am the Lord thy God, *which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage*." "I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine." "Ye are not your own; ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your bodies and spirits, which are God's." Nor are the revealed claims of God ever based on any other foundation than that of his universal and essential supremacy. Many motives to obedience may be suggested, and various reasons for the Divine appointments may be assigned; but it is invariably assumed in the revelation of his will, that the declaration of that will is the immediate ground for man's obligation. It is enough for him to know that the Lord hath spoken; from that moment obedience is his solemn duty.

This obligation to immediate and universal obe-

dience, implies, however, some circumstances in man by which he is qualified to render the required obedience ; and it is plain that it implies nothing more than what is necessary to this end. They are three ; an intelligent nature, capable of understanding and appreciating the divine proposal of good ; sufficient means for attaining it ; and freedom of choice, in adopting the line of conduct which is preferred.

We have said that it implies the intelligent nature of the creatures to whom the will of God is made known. In this lies the chief and essential difference between men and brutes, and without it there could plainly be no moral government. Every man is conscious in himself that he possesses such capacity ; he knows that he is capable of understanding the Divine testimony as to what is morally good or evil ; that he is capable of loving purity, righteousness, truth, benevolence ; and that it is in the nature of these moral virtues to administer satisfaction to his mind, whenever they present themselves to his view under circumstances which he approves or esteems right. Every man knows, further, that he is susceptible of the happiness which springs from the approbation of another, whose character, or station, or relation towards himself, render such approbation valuable in his esteem ; and consequently that he is capable of deriving happiness from the approbation of God, whenever he may be led to esteem his approbation of real importance. Man, therefore, is a moral agent ; his natural powers and faculties constitute him a proper subject of moral government. He

is capable of being addressed by God for his good, and of deriving satisfaction from that which pleases God and resembles him, and from the sense of being pleasing to him. To this moral capacity in man, the end is proposed ; which is, the enjoyment of God, including the delights of communion with him, and the communication of all needful supplies from his fulness.

Sufficient means for attaining the proposed end are also implied in moral obligation. To require an end, whilst the means are out of the agent's reach, or physically beyond his power, is manifest injustice. It is indispensable that there be an established and unfailing connexion between the one and the other, so that if the means be rightly used, the end will certainly follow ; and that these means be within the grasp of the creature's power. Both these circumstances characterize the government of God. So long as man continued to obey the Divine commands, he enjoyed the Divine blessing, and the happiness consequent thereupon ; and now, whenever, as a sinner, he repents and believes the gospel, he obtains acceptance and eternal life. In each case, the belief of the Divine testimony is the essence of obedience ; and none will assert that the revelation of his will is indistinct and equivocal, or that the motives to obedience are not of the highest character and influence.

The third thing implied is, freedom of choice, in adopting the line of conduct which is preferred. The question is put to every moral subject, whether he will seek a certain end in a certain connexion :—in the case of innocent man,

whether he would seek the approbation of God in abstinence from the forbidden tree ; in fallen man, whether he will seek the salvation of his soul by believing in Christ. If at the time when his decision is required, he be under restraint or compulsion, so that he cannot do the thing which he would, he is plainly not in circumstances of accountability ; his actions are not his own choice ; he is not therefore the subject of moral obligation. Freedom from all external restraint and constraint, full liberty to follow the dictates of his own judgment, as to what he ought to do, and to yield himself to the motives which are pressed on his attention, according to his own convictions of their importance and force, is the undoubted right of every moral subject. This is free agency, and this alone ; more than this, the creature cannot ask, as the ground of his responsibility, and less the Divine Governor could not bestow.

Such a moral agent is man. He is capable of knowing, loving, and serving God : he is furnished with ample means of knowledge, and with the strongest motives to love and obedience : he is shown that his happiness during the whole period of his undying existence, is inseparable from his enjoyment of the Divine favour : the terms on which he may be blessed are distinctly stated to him, and urged on his serious consideration and prompt adoption : he forms his own opinions, and acts accordingly. It does not, however, follow from hence, that there may not be cases in which the state of the mind may be



so totally wrong as to preclude the possibility of a right choice;—cases in which Divine influence itself may be requisite to prepare the mind to choose rightly; that is, to make such a choice as accords with the Divine estimate of what is good, and displays obedience to his revealed will. This is the fact with fallen man. His state of mind is evil; all his decisions, under its influence, are evil too; were it otherwise, his free agency would be destroyed; and, hence it is, that no motives to obey God avail to alter his conduct, till God has created in him “a new heart,” and formed within him “a right spirit;” but his moral obligation remains the same. His nature is depraved, and therefore gives a depraved character to all his volitions and acts; but it is free, and is therefore accountable in all things. To suppose that a right state of mind is necessary to moral obligation, is to suppose that intelligent creatures may *be* wrong, and *do* wrong, without being guilty;—that sin renders the sinner independent of his Maker, and constitutes him a being who may do with impunity whatever he pleases; yea, it is to deny the existence of any such thing as moral rectitude, in the abstract, to make God the author of moral evil, and to open the gates of libertinism, under the pretext of purity and truth.

The grounds of moral obligation are essential. If there are creatures who are capable of knowing and enjoying God, and if they have freedom of choice, and sufficiency of means, they are, by the very circumstance of their existence, moral agents; and, as God is their creator, He is himself morally

bound to direct their efforts, and prescribe their obedience. On the same principle it follows, that the grounds of moral obligation are unchangeable. They arise out of the nature of God and of the creatures, and the relations necessarily subsisting between them : they cannot be subject to any change ; nothing can alter their character ; not even the will of God—how much less the sin of man ! And, hence it follows, that they are indestructible. God must cease to be God, or the nature of the creatures cease to exhibit the properties of free intelligence, ere the moral obligations subsisting between them can be annulled.

The character of the obedience which is required, will further elucidate this subject. It is moral obedience, not the mere indulgence of the instinctive propulsions of animal nature, but the intelligent, conscientious, voluntary homage of the soul to the supreme authority, and perfect excellence of God. The perfection of his character is sufficient security for the perfection of his law, and the supremacy of his authority binds us to universal, cheerful, prompt, entire, and perpetual obedience. Whatever he enjoins is right ; right in itself, and right in its aspect and bearing on our consistency and happiness. And nothing short of the decided preference of his will above every thing else, and the complete and constant expression of that preference, under all circumstances, and in every relation, can meet his claims, who is the Father of spirits, and the fountain of life. These remarks apply equally to all the successive dispensations of God's moral

government ; to the law and to the Gospel ; to man as a creature and holy, and to man as a sinner and depraved ;—"the duty which God requires of man is, obedience to his revealed will." Accordingly, if we examine the Divine revelation on this point, we shall find that the obedience of man has always been required on precisely the same grounds. The same authority which bound Adam, in innocence, to love and serve God, requires his obedience when fallen ; directs the services of the patriarchs ; enjoins the duty of Noah, as the father of the new world ; appoints the religion of the Israelites ; and announces the precepts of the Gospel. To one and all, it is said, "Be ye holy, for I am holy."

The code of precepts, whether they be many or few, which, irrespective of all his changing circumstances, declare the duty of man, as a moral agent, to God the moral Governor, is called, THE MORAL LAW. The sum of that law is, "Love," which term must be understood to express all that is implied in a right state of mind, and a right line of conduct towards God, and towards all his creatures. As a principle, including sinless rectitude of disposition, and operating to produce sinless rectitude of conduct ; it existed in the first man, and showed "the work of the law written in his heart." He was "created in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness ;" to him it was not necessary to *say*, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself ;" he *felt* the obligation, and fulfilled it. The case of fallen men is altogether

different. In them the principle of Love is prostrated, and reduced beneath the rule of a haughty selfishness, which neither "fears God, nor regards man." Ignorance has succeeded to knowledge, and infidelity to faith. "There is none righteous, no not one." Their very mind and conscience are defiled. To men, in their fallen state, therefore, it became necessary to present the law anew; and this, not merely in its general principle, but in its varied detail, as applied to the diversified circumstances of men, putting a check upon their sinful propensities, and pointing out their several obligations and duties. All the precepts of Divine revelation, may be said to be included in that Law, which declares the duty of man towards God, and his fellow-men. If any exception to this general statement appear to be necessary in reference to those ceremonial and positive precepts which, under the successive dispensations of the Divine government, have served to direct the piety and mutual intercourse of men, there is less of reality in the exception, than at first sight may be supposed. The sacrificial and ceremonial worship of the Old Testament, illustrated the essential purity and claims of the Divine law; the municipal enactments of Judaism, were so many ramifications of the original law of love, adapted to the peculiar circumstances in which, for a season, that people were placed; the more spiritual and searching requirements of the New Testament, only bring out more fully the perfection and benevolence of the law of God; and the spirit of acceptable obedience, in all these cases, is one and

the same. In mercy to our infirmities, the Bible contains some short and comprehensive summaries of the moral law, under the particulars of which, all the precepts of revelation may be severally arranged; and which, by their brevity, and general character, are easily held in recollection, and rendered practically available for the various ends of religion and morals. Of these, "*The Ten Commandments*," delivered on Mount Sinai, and subsequently written by the finger of God on two tables of stone, are properly viewed as the most important. That they are a summary of the moral obligations which were originally laid upon man, is not denied; but it is sometimes argued that this repetition of the Moral Law had respect to the Jews only,—that it made a part of the Mosaic economy, and was abrogated along with it,—and that believers, under the New Testament dispensation, are freed from all obligation to obey it. By these parties, all attempts to enforce the law are stigmatised as derogatory to the glory of Divine grace, in human salvation, and as subversive of the doctrine of justification by faith. This renders it necessary, at the commencement of a series of expository discourses on the Moral Law, to attempt the proof of its permanent authority, as expressed in the summary of Sinai, or, in other words, to show that it is an essential part of the Christian religion.

A distinction is to be made between the law as a covenant, and as a rule of life. It was the basis of that dispensation under which man was placed at the beginning, and of which the trees of



knowledge and of life were the emblematical signs and seals. "Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, that the man which doeth those things shall live by them." The covenant being once broken, cannot be repaired: "therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in God's sight." But as a rule of life, the Moral Law is essentially, and therefore eternally binding, and may be often transgressed. It is in this latter sense that we assert its perpetual force. The abrogation of the law, as a covenant, must not, however, be taken too absolutely. Its terms of life have not in themselves ceased to be important, nor is their obligation destroyed, although they are no longer practically availing; the weakness is not in the law, but in the creatures who were placed under it. All men, as the natural posterity of Adam, their federal head, are born under the law; the condemnation of its just sentence is upon them: and whilst it may be mercifully true, in fact, that no man perishes everlastingly on account of Adam's sin alone, it is equally true that the consequences of *his* sin are entailed upon all his posterity; and that whilst they practically reject the covenant of mercy, they deliberately prefer to retain their union with the covenant of works, and remain under its sentence, and exposed to its curse. Besides, our guilty participation in the sin of Adam by our individual repetition of it, in spirit, if not in act, renders further necessary the provision of another righteousness, which is ready to be imparted to every one that believeth.—Attention is invited to the

following circumstances, as illustrating and proving the perpetual and changeless obligation of the Moral Law.

The necessity of the case implies that there is such an immutable law as that of which we speak. There is such a thing as holiness, such a thing as truth in the abstract. They cannot be ideal creations, or the result of a combination of fortuitous circumstances. Nor can it admit of a question, that the moral character of God is the perfection of these properties; it must be, therefore, that truth and holiness are in themselves unchangeable. Unless then, it can be shewn to be a matter of indifference, whether men love God or hate him, oppose or resemble him, it must be admitted that what is once binding on them as moral excellence, is always so; and that if the Ten Commandments did ever delineate the moral conformity to God, which is the duty and privilege of men, they do still, and must ever delineate that conformity.

The perfection of the Divine government implies the permanent authority of the Moral Law. The changing circumstances of the creatures, may call for alterations in what is merely positive in the intimations of Divine authority. Sin may have given a new aspect to the relations of men towards God, and have called for the adoption of new modes of government in those relations; but the relations themselves are unchangeable, and so are the principles of the government which is founded on them. If the moral claims of God on his creatures are now relaxed, it follows that they

were originally too strict; and what is this but to charge God with injustice? If they are now changed in *some* respects, it follows that they may afterwards be changed in others, till not a vestige of the original law remain; and what is this again but to charge the government of God with imperfection? Yea, if the moral law have ceased to be the rule of life, then is there no such thing as unity in the government of God, and this would go far to impugn the essential unity of his nature.

The declared perfection of the law itself involves the same conclusion. "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul;"—then, there is neither redundancy nor deficiency; it could not prescribe more, it cannot require less; it is complete as a whole, and unalterable in its parts. It is not dependent on adventitious circumstances; it must, therefore, be permanent in its obligations. It is an exact reflection of the perfect character of God, and must therefore be unchanging in its requirements. Whilst God is the centre of all excellence, and the fountain of all being, it must remain the duty of every intelligent creature to love him above all.

The design of God in separating the Israelites from all other people was, by them, to preserve in the world the knowledge of himself, and to perpetuate amongst men an example of obedience to his authority. The language in which this design is declared deserves notice in the present connexion: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy

God, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." "Thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. Know, therefore, that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, who keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him, and keep his commandments to a thousand generations; and repayeth them that hate him to their face, to destroy them: he will not be slack to him that hateth him, he will repay him to his face. Thou shalt, therefore, keep the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which I command thee this day, to do them." Deut. vi. 4, 5; vii. 6. 9. 11; *see also* x. 12, 13. 20—22; xi. 1, *et multis aliis*. Compare with this language, that in which New Testament believers are addressed. "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light; which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God; which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy." "Ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone; in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth into an holy temple in the Lord; in whom, ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."

1 Pet. ii. 9, 10; Eph. ii. 19. 22. The believing Jews then under the Old Testament, and the believers of all nations under the Gospel, are one church, and the design of their separation is the same: must not the moral obligations be the same under which they mutually lie?

Besides these general principles, it is important to observe that the delivery of the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai, was such as proves that they were not a part of the peculiar economy of Moses. The most solemn preparation was made for it; it was accompanied with the most awful pomp and grandeur; it was audible as if by the voice of God himself; and a solemn pause ensued;—"he added no more." The whole was then written on two tables of stone, as by the finger of God, and commanded to be deposited in the ark. At the introduction of a dispensation which was to break in upon the universal apostacy of the world, it was natural and highly important to save from oblivion the original law of our being, and solemnly to claim attention for it; and this was done in such a way as to detach it from the typical and changing economy which was to follow. "These words the Lord spake unto all the assembly on the mount, out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud, and of the thick darkness, with a great voice: and he added no more. And he wrote them upon two tables of stone, and delivered them unto Moses."

The design of the Mediation of Jesus, and the effect of the Spirit's work on the heart, may both be adduced in further confirmation of this point.



Speaking of the design of his Mediation, our Lord says, "Think not that I am come to destroy the Law, or the Prophets : I am not come to destroy but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in nowise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever, therefore, shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven : but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." Christ here declares that he came to fulfil (*complete*) the law. In him the design of the ceremonial law was answered, and its end gained, and by its reference to him its importance is illustrated and verified. The moral law was obeyed by him in all its precepts as a rule of life, and its penalty as a covenant of works was endured by him ; in both which he acknowledged its supreme and perpetual authority. Nor is it indistinctly intimated in this passage, that a due regard to "these commandments," would constitute an essential feature of holy obedience in "the kingdom of heaven." Accordingly, when the effect of the Spirit's work on the heart, is traced in its practical influence, it is shewn to produce the righteousness required by the law. "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of

the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." Believers are delivered from the curse and condemnation of the broken covenant; but mark what follows, and learn that they are still bound by the precepts of the law as a rule of life; "For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: *that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us*, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." None will argue that the ceremonial law is here meant; all agree that this is abolished; what other law can be meant then, but the law of the Ten Commandments given on Mount Sinai?

Again; the general declarations of Scripture respecting the law, imply its permanent and universal authority. Looking onward to gospel times, the prophet says, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah. After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." This passage is quoted in the New Testament as descriptive of the covenant made with believers whose sins are forgiven them for Christ's sake, Heb. viii. 8—12; and the apostle urging faith in the righteousness of Jesus, asks "Do we then make void the law through faith? By no means; for we establish the law." Yea, the several precepts of the Decalogue are

repeated in the New Testament, and obedience to them is urged by motives drawn from the grace and glory of Christianity itself. Their spirituality and extent are more clearly shewn; and conformity to them is invariably described as the consistency of Christian holiness; and thus they are certainly proved to be a constituent part of the Christian dispensation. Nor is the practical utility of this summary diminished. Still the law is a "school-master to bring us to Christ," and a rule of conduct to direct us to glorify him. It is adapted to all ages and all places, and is binding on the whole family of man.

It being then sufficiently obvious that the Ten Commandments, as a summary of the moral law, are of perpetual force, it is desirable to state the principles on which the interpretation of them should proceed.

I. It must always be remembered that "the law is spiritual." The sermon on the mount teaches us that it reaches to the "thoughts and intents of the heart;" that it has to do with words as well as acts, with motives as well as professions, with affections and passions, as well as with outward appearances.

II. In affirmative precepts, negatives are implied; and the contrary. When the due observance of the Sabbath is required, all desecration of the day is forbidden; and when murder is prohibited, the proper care of life is enjoined.

III. The general precepts of the law include every thing of the same kind. Obedience to parents is put for a due regard to relative duties



in general ; and adultery for every species of uncleanness and impurity.

IV. The principle of a command being ascertained, all divine light is to be thrown upon it, and the New Testament brought in to elucidate the precepts of the Old.

V. The end of the law is always to be kept in view ; this is “ Charity, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned.”

If, then, our connexion with the law is thus essential and unchangeable, and its precepts are so spiritual and comprehensive, let us labour to bring to the study of it a humble and teachable spirit ; let us receive its instructions with ready submission, and prepare ourselves to obey its commands with prompt and cheerful devotedness. Above all, let us implore the teaching of the Holy Spirit, to “ guide us into all truth,” and to incline us to all obedience.

## THE FIRST COMMANDMENT.

---

### EXODUS xx. 3.

“Thou shalt have no other gods before me.”

THE doctrine which is implied in this precept, and upon which it is founded, is that of the Divine Unity. There is but *one* being who fully answers to the just definition of God; and “Jehovah our God, is *one* Lord.” There may be, and the Bible teaches us that there are, real distinctions of attributes and personalities in his nature, yet there is the most perfect unity. A variety of considerations may be adduced in proof of the unity of God. There is in all nature a oneness of design, which proclaims the unity of the Great First Cause; and if in the transpiring events of this world’s history, there arise phenomena of difficult interpretation, there are none which may not be shown to comport with the doctrine of *one* creating and over-ruling power.—It is impossible that there should be more than one infinite being, or God. If there were more, they must be either equal or unequal; if equal, none of them could be supreme and independent, and we may conceive of

a being who should possess the united excellences of them all, who would be God : if unequal, the greatest alone is God. If there were many gods, they might will different, and even opposite things ; then all could not have their will, which is contrary to the nature of God. The most enlightened among the heathen perceived and admitted that there is but one God ; and in the Bible, where the Great Infinite Spirit has revealed his name, and declared his g'ory, nothing is more frequently asserted than his unity. There are, indeed, distinctions recognised as existing in the Divine Being, and these essential and personal. There are Three which bear record in heaven, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. We do not understand, and God has not revealed to us, the nature of these distinctions ; nor is it possible for us to explain *how* this peculiarity consists with his essential unity. But revelation supersedes philosophy, and silences reason. " Thus it is written ;" and our duty is to believe what " is written," and wait for further disclosures till time shall be lost in eternity. " Hear, O Israel, Jehovah our God is one Lord." " There is one God, and there is none other but he." " See now," (saith he,) " that I, even I am he, and there is no god with me ; I kill, and I make alive ; I wound, and I heal, neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand ; for I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever." The first commandment calls upon us to recognise, and practically regard the fact of his essential unity : " Thou shall have no others gods before me."

I. The first thing to be set forth is, the duty which is enjoined.

This is a due regard to the fact, that there is but one God. This truth, duly considered, is vast and overwhelming. There are many creatures scattered over the face of this earth; there are many grades of intelligence amongst men; there are other orders and classes of holy beings, rising in different degrees of intellectual and moral eminence, peopling the wide universe; but there is only *one* God. To realize this truth, we must reflect on what God is. "God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness justice, goodness, and truth." There is one such being, and there is not another. The present inquiry is, What is implied in a proper regard to this glorious being? To this we reply:—

1. Acquaintance with Him, as the only true God. That which we are to seek to know is, the existence of God, that he *is*; for "he that cometh to God must believe that he is;" and the essence of God, *what* he is; for otherwise we may incur the guilt of worshipping an unknown God. To know God perfectly, does not, indeed, lie within the reach of our capacity; "such knowledge is too wonderful for us; it is high, we cannot attain unto it." But a true knowledge of Him may be attained, and this commandment binds us to seek after it; for how can we rightly regard his claims, unless we first obtain the knowledge of himself?

The existence of God is learned from his works.

“The invisible things of God, even his eternal power and Godhead, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made.” It is commanded us to “stand still, and consider the wondrous works of God;” and *they* are pronounced guilty who “regard not the works of the Lord, nor consider the operations of his hands.” From the devout contemplation then, of the efforts of creating power, and wisdom, and goodness, which the universe presents, we are to learn the fact of the Divine existence, and to derive corresponding impressions of his unsearchable greatness, his infinite excellence, and his boundless benevolence.

Further acquaintance with God is to be derived from the observance of his general government of the creatures which he has made. “These all wait upon him, and he giveth them their meat in due season.” The revolutions of nature; and the character of his dispensations towards intelligent beings, both holy and unholy, illustrate the properties of his being, and unfold the greatness of his glory. And, thus saith the Lord, “Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even he shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord.”

The volume of Scripture presents still more ample and sufficient means for obtaining a knowledge of God. In it, he asserts his spirituality, his unity, his supremacy;—in it, he unfolds the excellences which compose his character, and which constitute the basis of his claims;—in it, he refers to the works which he has performed, and

to the government which he executes, as furnishing the most undeniable evidence of his existence, and innumerable illustrations of his power and wisdom, his holiness and justice, his goodness and truth. In this volume, he challenges the gods of the nations to do such works as he has done, and calls upon the people who know his name, as witnesses of his glory: "Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled; who among them can declare this, and show us former things? let them bring forth their witnesses, that they may be justified; or, let them hear, and say, It is truth. Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, and my servants whom I have chosen, that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he; before me there was no god formed, neither shall there be after me." To the diligent use of this means of Divine knowledge, we are repeatedly exhorted in the book itself;—"Seek ye out of the book of the Lord, and read." "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me."

But we have a still more impressive and touching medium of the knowledge of God, in the person and history of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the four lives of Jesus with which we are furnished, we trace the footsteps of God upon the earth. We see operating among us, and in circumstances that we can understand, the great power and wisdom of Him who rules over all, We behold, in the character of Christ, a perfect exhibition of infinite purity and rectitude; and,



in his unremitting aim to do good, a full expression of the matchless benevolence of Jehovah. Yea, in the gracious design of his Advent, in the righteousness he wrought out, and the sacrifice he offered, and in the bearing of the whole on the moral government of God and the eternal destinies of men, we read *all* his glory, to whom belong the greatness, and the power, and the dominion. To Jesus, our attention is pointed, as “God manifest in the flesh;” and we have “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.”

The first commandment requires such use of these means of Divine knowledge as may issue in the attainment of it. Our pursuit of it must be diligent, for the object is unspeakably vast; hearty, for the importance is infinite; patient, for the difficulties are many; persevering, for the theme is inexhaustible, and the knowledge of progressive increase;—it must be humble, for the greatness of Jehovah should be approached and viewed with reverence; and it should be conducted in the spirit of prayer, that God would deign to aid and succeed our efforts. Our *first* great business should be to know God. Our capacity of knowing Him, the relations in which we necessarily stand to Him, and the immense advantages which must result from right knowledge of Him, should impel us to seek acquaintance with Him; whilst the gracious promises of his word encourage us to persevere, “increasing” daily “in the knowledge of God.”

2. Habitual recognition of his presence, as the only true God, is also required by this precept.

With Him, as the only true God, we have unceasingly to do; nor is there any escape from his presence; wherever we are, and whatever we do, he is nigh unto us. There is not a single object of nature upon which we can look, or a single sound to which we can listen, or a single movement of our persons, or operation of our minds, which is not calculated to remind us of God. His incomprehensible greatness might well awe us into unceasing thought of Him; and his ineffable goodness is equally adapted to render the recollection of Him interesting and delightful. To forget Him, is to sin against Him; it is to fail of that proper regard which is due to Him, and which the first commandment requires of us. Obedience to this command implies such devout recognition of his presence, as is expressed by David, when he says, "O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting, and mine uprising; thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path, and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it. How precious are the thoughts of thee unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they



are more in number than the sand; when I awake, I am still with thee." "I have set the Lord *always* before me."

3. A proper regard to the Unity of God implies further, the cultivation and exercise of suitable affections towards Him, as the only true God.

The knowledge of God ought to lead to a cordial and immediate appropriation of Him as our God. He has an interest in us as his creatures, and we should seek an interest in Him as our God. Our hearts should at once become his throne, and his only; and we should seek all satisfaction in Him, and in Him alone. Thus Israel is said to "have avouched the Lord to be their God;" and we are exhorted to "join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant which shall not be broken."

We must love him, with that high regard of which his excellence is worthy, and which his kindness to us so imperiously demands. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." Not reluctantly, but cheerfully; not partially, having respect to certain properties of his character only, but wholly as being just as well as merciful, and holy as well as kind. We must love him so as to delight in him, to rejoice in him, to pant for communion with him, to desire his favour above all other things:—we must love him so as to be prepared to part with all for him; above father and mother, sister and brother, wife and children, houses and lands,

even as he who said, "Whom have I in heaven but thee; and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee."

Again; we must repose in him the confidence which his perfection warrants us to exercise. "Trust in him at all times, ye people." Confidence the most unlimited should be reposed in him; for he is infinitely wise, and powerful, and merciful, both able and willing to succour us. Confidence under all the circumstances in which we are placed; even when we walk in darkness, and see no light, we must trust in the Lord, and stay ourselves upon our God, for he knoweth the way that we take, and performeth only the thing which is appointed for us. Trust in the Lord wholly, "being careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, make known your requests unto God." Obedience to the command in this respect is expressed by Habakkuk: "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls. Yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

His supreme and exclusive claims further require, zeal for his glory. Zeal, in the performance of all holy duties; in our attachment and adherence to his truth, and his ways; and in asserting his claims and glory amongst men. Not deterred from the practice of righteousness, by either hopes or fears; not wronging any good cause either by

cowardice or indiscretion ; not resting ourselves in a mere nominal identity with his interests in the world ; we are to be “ valiant for the truth,” “ fervent in spirit, serving the Lord,” “ zealously affected always in a good thing,” and not under any circumstances “ ashamed of the Gospel of Christ.” The required obedience is that of Christ, who could say, “ My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.”

God should be glorified, too, in the grateful acknowledgment of his mercies. “ He is the author of all good, and his tender mercies are over all his works.” “ It is of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed.” How gratefully then should we acknowledge his unnumbered benefits : “ Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name ! Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgiveth all thine iniquities ; who healeth all thy diseases ; who redeemeth thy life from destruction ; who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies ; who satisfieth thy mouth with good things, so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle’s.”

Patient submission to his will is also implied in his claims as the one supreme God. Thus it is commanded, “ Submit yourselves therefore to God ;” “ Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord ;” “ Be patient in tribulation ;” “ Be still and know that I am God.” This is *our* reasonable service, and the just claim of his undivided glory : “ Wherefore should a living man

complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?" *His* will is supreme authority, and it is holy, just and good.

Penitence on account of our sins, and acquiescence in the appointed terms of pardon and life, though belonging to another economy, are properly viewed as acts of obedience to this command. It is the supremacy of Jehovah which gives to the New Testament precepts of repentance and faith, their importance and binding force; and a due sense of his claims, as the one God is the spirit of obedience to them. He who feels that God has a right to his obedience, and that he is guilty in not having rendered to him the obedience which is his due, will abase himself at his throne, will repent in dust and ashes, and will stand prepared to submit to any terms of mercy which he may be pleased to appoint; and when it is announced to him, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life;" "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; but he that believeth not the Son shall not see life;" the disposition which rightly regards the claims of the one God, will induce him at once to believe the testimony, and embrace the Saviour. The impenitent and unbelieving sinner under the gospel cannot escape the charge of transgressing the first commandment of the law in the very spirit of his impenitence and unbelief.

4. It is not enough, however, that right affec-

tions towards God exist in the heart ; they must be expressed in devotedness to the service of Jehovah, as the only true God.

This devotedness first of all implies, the open acknowledgment of the true God. Under circumstances where a plurality of gods are adored, the importance of such acknowledgment is at once apparent. In such circumstances, the patriarchs were almost always found ; and the Israelites very often. In their own land indeed, the very circumstances were guilty ; but the individual exposure to their insidious and seducing influence was often innocent, and always required the open decision of which we speak. During the captivity in Babylon, there were some splendid instances of obedience to this command, in the open acknowledgment of the true God. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, ventured on the fiery furnace, and Daniel on the lions' den, rather than renounce, or fail to acknowledge the God of Israel. The early Christians were perpetually placed in situations which required regard to this precept. Idol temples were in every place. Hence the apostle forbids the Corinthians to be found there, and prohibits the eating of meats offered to idols. Paul and Barnabas, on one occasion, found it necessary to protect themselves against the idolatry of the people, who called Barnabas, Jupiter, and Paul, Mercurius, and would have done sacrifice unto them. In lands but partly evangelized, the same necessity still exists, and the same injunctions are strictly binding. And even where Christianity has gained for itself the ascendancy, open attention to the

will of God, and identity with his cause, must express obedience to this command. They who admit his claims in theory only, practically deny him. "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God, even he who is corrupt, and a doer of abominable works, and who doeth not good."

This devotedness requires that we direct all our efforts to his glory as their end; for, exactly in proportion that we pursue another object, we recognise another authority than his, and are guilty of idolatry in his sight. The command is, "Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as to the Lord, and not to men." "Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

In all things we must be supremely directed by the will of God. His sole and supreme authority requires that we unhesitatingly and cheerfully obey *all* his appointments; that we acquiesce, without a murmur, in the arrangements of his government, as to the general efforts of our lives, the sphere of our movement, the character of our daily occupation, and the degree of our worldly comfort; that we do not go before, but always and immediately follow the leadings of his providence, consulting not our own will, but asking continually what the Lord would have us to do; and that, in religious services, we take the written word for our only rule, adding nothing, altering nothing, diminishing nothing. A due regard to the one God is that which can say, "I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right."



Further; we must devote ourselves wholly to his will; keeping back nothing from Him; giving Him our whole heart; consecrating to Him all our powers, and cheerfully acknowledging his right over all that we possess: he is the one God, and is therefore the source, and proprietor of all things. We must do this at all times, under all circumstances, and to the end of life; neither forsaking nor turning aside from his ways, for this were to deny his claims and Godhead: "He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." All this must be done in dependence on his gracious and promised aid; all our springs are in Him, and the recognition of our dependence and of his fulness is as necessary to our safety as to his glory.

II. As "the first commandment requires us to know and acknowledge God to be the only true God, and our God, and to worship and glorify Him accordingly;" it must be understood to forbid "the denying, or not worshipping and glorifying, the true God, as God, and our God; and the giving that worship and glory to any other, which is due to Him alone."

1. It forbids Atheism; or the having of no God.

The atheism that denies the existence of God, has been so rare, and is so unnatural, that the sincerity of its professions has always been questioned. It need scarcely be said that the profession of it is itself a transgression of this command. But there is a practical atheism, a living "without God in the world," against which it



is equally directed. No man can deny the supreme glory and claims of God, or refuse to acknowledge his supremacy, and submit to his will, without being practically guilty of atheism. To deny the doctrine of his providential care and government, and to neglect those religious ordinances in which he claims to be acknowledged and glorified, is also to live without God. Yea, *he* is an atheist, and condemned by this precept, who does not, in his heart, acknowledge God as the source of his being, the preserver of his life, the spring of his comforts, the disposer of his circumstances, and the lord of his actions.

2. It forbids Polytheism ; or the worshipping of many gods.

This takes place among the heathen, who, in ignorance of the one true God, acknowledge "gods many," and offer to them licentious and cruel service. This took place amongst the Jews, who blended with an outward regard to the worship of Jehovah, the idolatrous worship of false gods. This takes place in the Church of Rome, which, whilst it acknowledges Jehovah, worships also saints, and angels, the Virgin Mary, the wood of the cross, images, pictures, yea, the Pope himself. In purer Protestant communities there are those who try to serve God and Mammon ; or to exalt self and sin to a throne and an authority equal to those of God ; and thus attempt a polytheistic practice, whilst they would shrink with instinctive horror from the theory.

3. It forbids Idolatry ; or the worshipping and serving of something instead of God.

This is not confined to the worship of images ; the worship of nature, of reason, of fortune, of chance, of fate ; the worship of self, the world, the creatures, is idolatry, at least as real and guilty, if not as gross and carnal. The *proud man*, idolizes himself, and offers incense at his own altar ; therefore God views him as his rival. The *ambitious man* deifies the opinions of his fellows ; for to these he pays supreme regard. The *vengeful man* usurps the throne of God, and invades His prerogative to whom “vengeance belongeth.” The *covetous man* deifies his wealth, and literally falls down and worships a god of gold. The *rapturous lover* deifies his mistress ; the *man of business*, his occupation or success ; the *man of intellect*, his powers of understanding and research ; the *man of literature*, his scientific distinctions ; the *man of virtue*, his moral superiority ; the *man of religion*, his consistency, and steadfastness, and perseverance. Yea, the *lawful objects of affection* severally become idols, which usurp the throne of God ; and before the *shrine of talent*, though debased by impurity and profaneness, by levity and irreligion, crowds of deluded votaries pay their daily and their nightly homage ; and many a marble tablet, and sculptured form, and splendid mansion, tell the shameless tale of concealed and unsuspected idolatry. That which has the heart is god to us ; how many strange gods then are adored !

4. It forbids all neglect of the proper claims of God.

Ignorance of God, with all the deficient em-

ployment of the means of knowing Him; and forgetfulness of God, with every neglect in acquiring the constant sense of his presence, are transgressions of this precept. All vile, selfish, and sinful affections, as in the sight of God; all unworthy and sinful thoughts of God; all mistrust and hatred of God; all lukewarmness and coldness towards God; all insensibility to his mercies, and impenitence on account of sin; all pride, hardness of heart, and unbelief; yea, all want of that full confidence, supreme love, fervent zeal, sincere penitence; deep humility, reverential awe, and cheerful submission, which are required by the claims of his excellent glory, are so many breaches of this command. To neglect any part of his service, whether directly towards himself, or indirectly towards the creatures; and to do any thing without God, is thus to sin against Him.

III. Various arguments or reasons of obedience to this precept are suggested by the words "*before me,*" with which it closes.

1. They remind us of God's incomparable glory; there is none like Him, none with whom he can be compared; his claims, therefore, ought not to be put in competition with those of any other being. "To whom will ye liken me, and make me equal, and compare me, that I may be like? I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times, the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure."

Every man who rightly regards the incomparable glory of God, must feel how reasonable and proper is his prompt and entire obedience to the command, "Thou shalt have no other gods *before me.*" "Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?"

2. The supreme authority of Jehovah is asserted in the words "before me;" it is dangerous to disobey or contend with Him. Behold, "it is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in." "He doeth according to his will, in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" "He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength; who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered?" How should we beware that we give not our hearts and energies to another; He is jealous of his glory.

3. His infinite knowledge is suggested as another reason for obedience; we cannot sin against Him without his knowing it; nothing is hidden from Him: "There is no creature that is not manifest in his sight; all things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." "He searches the hearts, and tries the reins of the children of men." "If then we have forgotten the name of our God, or stretched out our hands to a strange god, shall not God search this out? for he knoweth the secrets of the

heart." And how shall we answer it to Him, when he ariseth to judgment?

4. The presence of God is so near to us, and about us continually, that we cannot overlook or neglect his claims, without incurring the guilt of those who forget Him, and live without God in the world. "Whither shall we go from his Spirit? or whither shall we flee from his presence?" And shall we dare, in his very presence, to provoke Him to jealousy with those which are no gods?

5. The punishment with which God has actually visited idolatry, may be further introduced here, as illustrative of the implicit obligation to obedience. The ancient inhabitants of the world, "when they knew God, glorified him not as God; neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind." The Jews dishonoured Him by serving other gods, and he caused them to be carried captive to Babylon; and when they would not acknowledge the claims of the Messiah, who is "over all, God blessed for ever," but filled up the measure of their iniquities in crucifying Him, and then in forbidding the Apostles to proclaim

his glory among the Gentiles, he took away both their place and nation ; and they remain to this day, monuments of His indignation, who says, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."

6. All this implies what in the New Testament is distinctly taught, that disregard to the claims of God, excludes from heaven.

Thus we read, "My dearly beloved, flee from idolatry." "For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor any unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God." "Idolaters shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone ; which is the second death." "Without holiness shall no man see the Lord."



## THE SECOND COMMANDMENT.

---

EXODUS XX. 4—6.

“Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them; for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.”

As the first commandment supposes the unity of God, and requires attention to his exclusive claims as the only God; so the second supposes the spirituality of God, and requires due regard to Him as a Spirit. *That* has to do with the object, *this* with the mode of our worship and obedience.

It is here assumed that the Deity is not a gross body, which may be seen with mortal eyes, or perceived by the touch; but that he is a purely spiritual being, “dwelling in light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen, or can see.” “He is the King eternal, immortal, invisible.” The fact that he pervades the wide universe by his presence, so that there is no place



of escape from the scrutiny of his eye, nor any passing beyond the sphere of his influence and abode, plainly shows that he is not material ; for matter is necessarily confined to some shape and limits. He is not, however, the soul of the universe ; for that would imply that he had taken it into union with himself ; but he is an independent, essentially vital, and intelligent being.

The Jews were thus reminded by Moses of his spirituality ; (Deut. iv. 9—19.)—" Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life : but teach them thy sons and thy sons' sons ; specially the day that thou stoodest before the Lord thy God in Horeb, when the Lord said unto me, Gather me the people together, and I will make them hear my words, that they may learn to fear me all the days that they shall live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children. And ye came near, and stood under the mountain ; and the mountain burned with fire unto the midst of heaven, with darkness, clouds, and thick darkness. And the Lord spake unto you out of the midst of the fire : ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude ; only ye heard a voice. And he declared unto you his covenant which he commanded you to perform, even ten commandments ; and he wrote them upon two tables of stone. And the Lord commanded me at that time, to teach you statutes and judgments, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go over to possess it. Take ye there-

fore good heed unto yourselves; for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire: lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female, the likeness of any beast that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged fowl that flieth in the air, the likeness of any thing that creepeth on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the waters beneath the earth: and lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even all the host of heaven, shouldst be driven to worship them, and serve them, which the Lord thy God hath divided unto all nations under the whole heaven.”

This command requires a due regard to the Divine Spirituality, in all our ideas of Him, affections towards Him, and service of Him; and it binds us to obedience by several highly important considerations. Our first object must be to—

I. State the obedience which this commandment requires. Of this an interesting summary is given by our Lord; John iv. 24. “God is a Spirit; and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth.”

1. It requires a distinct recognition of the Divine Spirituality, and forbids all corporeal or material representations and conceptions of Him. “God is a Spirit.”

The history of the world in every age has furnished the most affecting proofs of the proneness of men to indulge in gross conceptions of the

Divine Being, and to form material representations of Him. Indeed, all idolatry seems to have originated in attempts to provide some visible representation or image of the true object of worship. And, perhaps, nothing is more difficult, as every sincere worshipper feels and laments, than to preserve the mind free from the influence of imagination in reference to the Godhead. Too often, when no image presents itself to the eye, a gross conception intrudes on the mind, and we find ourselves prostrate at the footstool of a creature like unto ourselves. This proneness to overlook the strict spirituality of God, is not to be traced to our ignorance of that spirituality. For a little reflection, and it is surely more than a little which we ought to exercise on a subject of such infinite moment as the nature of God, is sufficient to convince us that "God is a Spirit." The argument which the Apostle employed with the Athenians, in order to show them the absurdity of all attempts at a visible representation of the Deity, is so plain and forcible, as to appeal to every man with convincing force. "Forasmuch then as *we* are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device." We, who are the offspring of God, are living creatures; how inadequate then must be an inanimate thing to represent the Creator! We are rational beings; how inadequate then must be an irrational, though it even were a living thing, to represent the Creator! We are spiritual beings; this our consciousness, our power of voli-

tion, our mental affections demonstrably prove ; how inadequate then must be a material object, to represent the Creator, who must himself be a Spirit. We are not left, however, to a process of argument to learn the spirituality of God. It is an express object of Divine revelation. God has taught us in his word that he is a Spirit :—an infinite Spirit, who fills immensity with his presence ;—an eternal Spirit, who is alike without beginning and without end ;—an omnipotent Spirit, to whom all things are possible ;—an omniscient Spirit, to whom all things are known ;—a perfect Spirit, whose nature is free from evil ;—an unchangeable Spirit, whom no circumstances can affect ; and that as a Spirit, we must conceive of Him and regard Him, if we would worship Him aright ; so that our tendency to overlook his spirituality, does not proceed from ignorance of it. Nor does the difficulty which we feel in entertaining the idea of a spiritual being, sufficiently account for this tendency. For whilst it is admitted that we are ignorant of the nature of a spiritual being, and are incapable of conceiving of such being, otherwise than by the properties which inhere in it, this is nothing but what is equally true in reference to material existence. We are quite as ignorant of the nature of matter as we are of that of spirit ; we know both, only by their distinctive and essential properties : so that there does not seem to be any natural reason why the idea of a spiritual agent, that can think, and will, and feel, should be more difficult of conception to us, ourselves such beings, than it is for us to en-

tain a correct idea of a material being, of which we can know nothing, but by its solidity, magnitude, and extension. These remarks are introduced, because there is reason to fear that we are ready to find an excuse for our neglect of the Divine spirituality in the supposed difficulty that attends it, as though the idea was unattainable; whereas, it does not appear that, in the nature of the case, there ought to be to a spiritual being, like the human soul, any greater difficulty in realizing the existence of a spiritual being, than to the material man in perceiving a material object; and the apostle Paul appealed to the Athenians on the point, as one with which the soul is, or might be familiar. But this proneness is to be traced into the moral depravity of the human spirit. Sin has dethroned reason, blinded and perverted it. It has given ascendancy in us to that which is material and sensible. It has subordinated the superior part of our nature, to that which is inferior. It has destroyed the love of God in us, so that we are without inclination to employ the means which we possess for acquainting ourselves with God, and are equally unwilling to submit ourselves unto Him, and thus by our dislike of God, and opposition to his authority, we have unfitted ourselves for entertaining a correct knowledge of Him. Nor is this mere reasoning; it is the sense of Scripture; the tendency of men to overlook the spirituality of God is referred to this source; Rom. i. 18—25. “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the



truth in unrighteousness ; because that which may be known of God is manifest in them : for God hath showed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead ; so that they are without excuse : because that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools : and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves : who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen."

The second commandment is directed against this sinful tendency in men. It reminds us of the spirituality of God, and requires us distinctly to recognise it, and to avoid all corporeal or material representations and conceptions of him. We must not make an image of " any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth," as a representation of Jehovah, to bow down ourselves to it, and serve it. We must not conceive of Him as though he were a creature like to ourselves ; but remember that " God is a Spirit," an infinite, eternal, omni-



potent Spirit, "who made the worlds, and all things therein;" who "dwelleth not in temples made with hands;" who "is not worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing that he giveth to all, life, and breath, and all things."

Nor let us think to find an excuse for our neglect of the Divine Spirituality in that language of inspiration which speaks of Jehovah as though he had the corporeal faculties of men. This language is employed in condescension to our infirmities, to convey to us some suitable ideas concerning the properties of this Great Spirit; and these representations themselves might show to us the folly of all such conceptions of Him as those which we are prone to indulge. The *eyes* of the Lord, are eyes that "are in every place beholding the evil and the good." The *ears* of the Lord, are ears that hear in secret, that listen to thoughts, and attend to the breathings of desire. The *arm* of the Lord, is that which laid the foundations of the earth, and which sustains all things in existence, &c.

This regard to the spirituality of God does not leave us at liberty to employ images or pictures as helps to our devotion; on the contrary, it expressly forbids it. We are commanded not to make to ourselves any representation of the Divine Being, or any image of any thing as connected with the idea of worship. The command does not, however, forbid all statuary and painting, as some have said; for even God himself appointed these for certain purposes under the Mosaic economy,

which had the cherubim overshadowing the mercy-seat; but it forbids all attempts to represent Jehovah by images, or pictures, or creatures of the imagination, and requires us to worship Him as a Spirit.

2. It requires that we engage in his service with spiritual affections and feelings, and forbids every thing that is opposed to such spiritual service. "God is a Spirit; and they that worship him, must worship him in *spirit*."

We must serve God with sincerity. All external forms are unprofitable and sinful, if the heart be not engaged. God requires the heart, and without it the tongue is a liar, and the greatest zeal is mere dissembling before God. This commandment then forbids all mere formality and hypocrisy in the service of God, and pronounces all that worship sinful which is not sincere. "The Lord looketh at the heart;" and Jesus pronounces them hypocrites, who draw nigh unto him with their mouth, and honour Him with their lips, whilst their heart is far from Him.

Humility is another spiritual affection with which we must serve God. "He knoweth the proud afar off, but giveth grace to the humble." Paul speaks of "serving the Lord with all humility of mind." This, the greatness and glory of God require; "God is in heaven, and thou upon earth;" and this, he has graciously promised to accept; "to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word."

Fervour of feeling is also included in spiritual

service. We are to love God not only with all our heart, but also with all our strength ; we must bring our full vigour to the worship of God. Thus David prays, "Quicken us, that we may call on thy name;" and stirs up himself for the service of God : "Awake up, my glory ; awake psaltery and harp ; I myself will awake early." Can there indeed be any thing so unworthy, as a cold spiritless attention to the service of God ? If fervour be any where required, it is surely when we attempt to celebrate the praises, and pursue the glory of God.

Again, we are required to serve God with gladness of heart. "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands. Serve the Lord with gladness ; come before his presence with singing. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise : be thankful unto him, and bless his name. For the Lord is good ; his mercy is everlasting ; and his truth endureth unto all generations." God is the object of delight to those who truly love and serve Him. Angels rejoice in Him, and heaven is filled with the triumphant adoration of his creatures. All low, despairing, melancholy feelings in the service of God are uncongenial with his claims and glory. Deep contrition, indeed, becomes sinners in their adoration of his purity, but this is quite consistent with the most pure and exalted delight in the perfection of his glory and the fulness of his grace. It is the character of a spiritual man, that he delights to do the will of God.

Spiritual service implies faith. "Without faith

it is impossible to please God ; for he that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." This confidence in Him as the parent of all being, and the source of all good, is of the very nature of worship ; and in the case of sinful men, the devout recognition of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the revealed medium of acceptable approach to God, is of the nature of worship too. " I am the way," said Jesus, " and the truth, and the life ; no man cometh unto the Father but by me." This command requires faith in God, under whatever circumstances, or by whatever parties he is approached, and requires, therefore, a due regard to the revelation of God as to the ground of that confidence ; while it forbids all unbelief as derogatory to the glory of the Infinite Spirit, and all approach to Him, but through the medium of his gracious appointment as mere presumption. The promises which encourage us to engage in his service, are " yea and amen in Jesus Christ ;" and no effort to please or glorify God, can be accepted but for his sake.

Nor must we fail to mention, that spiritual service is that which is rendered in dependence on the influence and grace of the Holy Spirit. However insensible men as sinners may be to the fact of their entire dependence on Divine aid for wisdom and power to serve God, man in innocence was fully sensible of it, and angels in heaven constantly feel it. They who serve God acceptably on earth, do so in his own strength. They go forth to his service " in the strength of the Lord

God ;” they look to his fulness as they proceed for new supplies of power and grace ; and they exercise this dependence even to the end. They bear every trial, they meet every difficulty, they discharge every duty, they encounter every opposition, they pursue every object, relying on the gracious help of God ; and thus obey the second commandment which requires the renunciation of self, forbids all attempts to serve God in our own strength, and says, “ Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.”

3. This command requires due attention to all the ordinances of worship which God has instituted, and forbids every thing as worship, which he has not appointed. “ God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him, must worship Him in spirit and in *truth*.”

To obey this command we must first ascertain what are the religious services in which God requires us to engage. Here, as in all other questions connected with the Divine glory, the word of God is our only guide. The precise appointments of Jehovah as to the modes and ordinances of worship may vary, and have varied, under the successive dispensations of his government ; but the principle of this command is the same : it requires that God be worshipped only according to his own will. It required the animal sacrifices of the patriarchal dispensation, and afterwards the entire observance of the Levitical economy ; now it demands obedience to the ordinances of Christianity. God requires of us personal worship, in our closets ; domestic worship, in our



families ; and public worship in his sanctuary. The personal worship includes prayer, praise, the reading of the Scriptures, and Divine meditation. Domestic worship implies the assembling our families together for worship, including prayer, the reading of the word, and where practicable, singing ; and this, at least, every morning and evening ; and the diligent and regular instruction of our children and servants in the great truths of God. Public worship consists of united prayer and praise in the name of Christ ; the reading, preaching, and hearing of the word ; the administration and reception of the Lord's Supper ; the fellowship of Christian society ; with the observance of Baptism, the initiatory rite of the New Dispensation, and of private, social, and public seasons of fasting as occasion may require. On each of these particulars much might be written ; to the principle of obedience to God, our attention is now called. We are bound to engage in these services, because he has appointed them ; neglecting none of them, but engaging in them with conscientiousness and regularity, according to their respective claims.

This precept forbids all service which God has not appointed. Whilst it is written, " Whatsoever is not of faith, is sin," we must conclude that whatever is rendered for worship, or made a medium or expression of it which has not his specific appointment, whatever arguments on the ground of expediency, or antiquity, or human authority, we may be able to furnish for its sanction, is unacceptable to Him ; it is mere will-



worship. Whether fixed formularies of worship be good or evil in themselves, and whether they act wisely for their souls and for eternity who adopt them, it is not important here to decide; but this is plain, that the imposition of such compilations by any authority, since God has not enjoined them, is a breach of this commandment, since it is an attempt to legislate where he has not legislated in religion; and that to submit to such imposition is to seek the blessing of God out of the way of his appointment and promise, and thus transgress his commandment. This principle being perceived and understood, it is easy to see how all Pagan and Romish idolatry is contrary to this command, and forbidden by it; and how all superstitious additions to God's appointment in purer Protestant communities, are so many breaches of this command. God cannot be worshipped "*in truth*," when he is worshipped as he has not appointed.

II. To the second commandment are added three important sanctions, by which obedience is enforced; the jealousy, the justice, and the mercy of God.

1. The jealousy of God is referred to as an argument for obedience to this precept. "*I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God.*"

Idolatry is often described as spiritual adultery, and God is spoken of as jealous for his rights, and his glory as the object of worship. Jealousy is quick-sighted; it perceives with alarm the slightest deviation from consistency and propriety. It is described by Solomon as being "cruel like the

grave." What then must the jealousy of God be? He is infinitely more sensible of his rights and claims than any of the creatures can be, and he is perfectly acquainted with every, even the most secret infringement of them. How narrowly should we watch over our worship, and how carefully search our hearts, and try our reins as in his presence.

2. The justice of God takes fearful retribution on the breakers of this commandment. "*Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me.*"

The light in which God views the transgressors of this precept, as haters of Him, fully bears out the conclusion to which we have come as to the source to which must be referred our proneness to overlook and neglect his spirituality. We do not like to retain the thoughts of such a being as he is, and therefore we make no appropriate effort to realize his infinite presence, but try to screen ourselves by the difficulty which attaches to it. The severity of God in punishing idolatry, is well calculated to rebuke our unholy selfishness, and deter us from thus insulting his glory. How does the history of the Jews show this severity; and what an awful proof is given of it in the condition of Pagan nations, Rom. i. 20—28, and in the "strong delusions" of the Antichristian apostacy. 2 Thess. ii. 11. What a solemn warning is hereby given to parents, not to entail the guilt of idolatry upon their children, and to children not to tread in the steps of ungodly parents, lest they be punished for their sins, when they thus mark their approba-

tion of them. Some read the passage "by the children," instead of upon, and illustrate it by the case of Sennacherib, whose "sons slew him as he was worshipping in the house of his god." 2 Kings xix. 37.

3. We are encouraged to obey this command by a declaration of the mercy of God. "*Showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.*"

Not that obedience merits the Divine favour, but such is the condescending grace of God that he says, "Him that honoureth me, I will honour." How extensively has the history of the world shown the truth of this gracious promise; and who that reflects on the value of God's favour does not feel that the hope of its enjoyment is a most powerful inducement to obey his will.

The addition of this promise to the commandment is a remarkable fact, deserving of serious attention. There is nothing surprising in the previous sanction; it displays the reign of strict and impartial justice, and only pre-intimates its settled purpose of equity; but that God should encourage to obedience by a promise of mercy, is a proof of sovereign favour, which compels us to regard even the law when given on Sinai as breathing the spirit of the Gospel. Its very terms imply sin, and suggest the idea of forgiveness. Its authority is perpetuated as at the beginning, but it is seen anticipating its illustrious fulfilment by the Divine Mediator, and becomes itself the organ of gracious encouragement and hope.

## THE THIRD COMMANDMENT.

---

### EXODUS xx. 7.

“Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless, that taketh his name in vain.”

THE third commandment proceeds on the assumption of God's infinite greatness, and requires reverential regard to it. “Behold, God is great, and we know Him not;” “his greatness is unsearchable.” The essential peculiarity of his nature, as Three in One, is an inexplicable mystery; all the properties of his being are perfect, we cannot search them out: and his “judgments are far above out of our sight.” From Him nothing is hid; no, not even the secret thoughts of the heart, and “there is no place where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves.” Before Him all the inhabitants of the earth are as grasshoppers, and his power none can withstand. “Who then in the heavens can be compared to the Lord? Who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the Lord?” Verily, God is great, and “greatly to be feared.” “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless, that taketh his name in vain.”

“Serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear, for even our God is a consuming fire.”

The name of God is put for all that by which God makes himself known. The titles by which he is designated, the attributes which compose his being, the works he has performed, the word he has inspired, and the various ordinances of religion which he has instituted, all unfold his glory, and assert his claims. The third commandment then must be understood to require a holy and reverential regard to God as he has made himself known, and in all that by which he makes himself known; and to forbid all impiety, and every thing that is not strictly reverential in his sight; and it does both under the sanction of that fearful declaration; “the Lord will not hold him guiltless, that taketh his name in vain.”

I. The nature of that reverential regard to the Deity which is required must be first explained. It includes the following particulars.

1. Diligent study of the Divine glory.

God has condescended variously to make himself known unto us, and when he forbids all slighting of that by which he is known, he virtually requires that we duly improve all those means by which we may become acquainted with Him. The titles of God must be attentively considered, that we may discover his dignity; and piously contemplated, that we may not trifle with them.—The attributes of God must be viewed in their individual import and their combined harmony, that we may know who and what he is; their doctrinal signification must be sought, and their practical influence felt.—

The works of God must be patiently investigated, and practically regarded. The heavens declare his glory; the earth is full of his goodness; his government both in the universality, which includes all creatures, and the specialty, which takes care of individuals, set forth his perfection and excellence. "All his works praise him, and his saints should bless him." "The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein."—The word of God must be seriously and habitually read, with personal application and humble prayer. The like pious attention is required to all Divine ordinances, and the professions of pious men, since by these also we may increase in the knowledge of God.—This study of the Divine glory must be habitual, laborious, patient, persevering, and prayerful, avoiding the idle curiosity that would pry into things unseen, and the merely speculative study, which has no practical influence or aim.

## 2. Habitual sense of his presence.

That man cannot be said to fear his great and dreadful name who lives in forgetfulness of Him. The holy veneration of his majesty will naturally induce a careful and practical recognition of his presence. They only can be said to obey this command who habitually feel that they are under his eye, and in his presence, and who indulge a corresponding anxiety to please and glorify Him. To forget God, or to think of his omnipresence only, as a sublime theory, and not as a practical reality, is to slight the name of Jehovah.

## 3. Humility of mind.



The greatness of God, rightly perceived and felt, cannot fail to produce such a feeling of deep awe, as Job describes when he says, "When I remember, I am afraid, and trembling taketh hold on my flesh;"—such a sense of entire unworthiness and insignificance as David expressed, "Lord, what is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man, that thou visitest him?"—such a fear of his displeasure as Joseph exhibited when he repelled the syren voice of temptation, saying, "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"—such a deeply affecting sense of our sinfulness, and need of God's mercy as the publican discovered when he stood afar off, and smote on his breast, and cried, "God be merciful to me a sinner." The absence of this humility is a proof that we are not duly impressed with the majesty of God; how much more then must all pride, and self-importance, all presumption and vain glory, all dependence on our own wisdom and strength, and pursuit of our own advantage as the chief end, be considered as a slighting or profaning of his great name!

#### 4. Divine conformity in the affections.

To exhibit that serious regard to Jehovah which this command enjoins, the affections of the soul must be withdrawn from those vain and carnal objects on which they naturally fix; for the preference given to worldly and sinful objects, and the aversion naturally felt towards God, and those things which he esteems, and loves, is a practical slight of Him. The soul that fears Him,

loves the things which he loves, and hates those which he hates.

5. Serious language on all Divine subjects.

The glory of God is too awful and important a thing to be spoken of in any particular, or under any circumstances, but with the greatest solemnity. At best we do but lisp his name; we cannot speak his glory. To utter his name, then, or speak of any thing which pertains to Him in any other language than that which is most chastened, select, devout, is presumptuous and profane. To speak of sacred things with levity of manner, in a spirit of carelessness, or for any purpose but that of edifying, and to employ sacred language on profane or common occasions, is to transgress this precept, and "take God's name in vain."

6. Scrupulous regard to religious vows.

God requires us to enter solemnly into covenant with Him, and having done so, to renew the pledge on special occasions. For this practice there is the sanction of many illustrious names. Jacob vowed a vow, when he departed from his father's house; Hannah vowed a vow, when she prayed unto the Lord at the Tabernacle; David "swore unto the Lord, and vowed unto the mighty God of Jacob;" and Paul shaved his head in Cenchrea, for he had a vow. Great care is requisite in making vows; their object must be lawful, such as we have ability to execute, and as it is proper to perform: "Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before

the angel that it was an error ; wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thy hands ?” Vows should be made in so guarded a manner, as not to admit of misconstruction, or unnecessarily to place us in subsequent difficulty ;—Jephthah’s vow was faulty in this respect. It was couched in too general terms, and conveyed more than he meant. They must be made in a holy and devotional spirit ; for “ unto the wicked, God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth ?”—The strict performance of all lawful vows is also required by this precept ; “ Vow, and pay unto the Lord your God ;” not to do so, is to trifle with his glorious name. All hasty resolutions on the subject of religion, and all forgetfulness of solemn professions, and practical disregard to them, must be viewed as breaches of this command.

7. Solemnity in taking oaths, and strict compliance with them.

The fact, that God himself is represented as swearing ; that he directed the administration of oaths, for judicial purposes, under the Old Testament Dispensation ; that our Lord Jesus Christ answered the High Priest’s adjuration when he was put on his trial, after having in his ministry exposed the fallacy and guilt of mental reservation in oath-taking ; and, that the Apostles on various occasions, employed oaths for confirmation, teach us that there is nothing morally wrong in this kind of swearing. But the volume of Scripture every where shows that the act is

one of great solemnity, and of strictly binding obligation; the command is, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." To comply with this command, the occasion must be one of sufficient importance to justify an appeal to the Almighty, as when Paul said to the Corinthians, "I call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet to Corinth;" otherwise the name of God is but profaned by it. Oaths must be taken in a deeply solemn spirit, realizing the glorious character of God, to whom the appeal is made: "Thou shalt swear, the Lord liveth,—in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness." And when once taken, oaths must be very religiously regarded. Thus, in the case of the Gibeonites, to whom Israel had sworn to preserve them alive, they kept the oath, and when, at a subsequent period, this oath was vilely broken by Saul, the Lord visited the guilt upon the land and upon his house. 2 Sam. xxi. This is the character of them who shall dwell in God's holy hill; "they swear to their own hurt, and change not." Our Lord's prohibition of swearing under the New Testament must, in spirit, if not in letter, be understood to forbid oaths. It requires such regard to truth, in every affirmation and negation, as shall render oaths unnecessary. If it permit oaths at all, it certainly restricts the taking of them within the narrowest possible limits; and it plainly contemplates a state of society under the hallowing influence of Christian principles, when even for ends of political justice, they shall neither be required nor necessary. Matt. v. 33—37.

8. Simplicity and frankness of general conversation.

All the communications of men with each other should be so marked by candour and truth, as to need no oath for confirmation; the degree in which they are not so, is a profanation, a slight put on the glorious name of God, as "the God of truth." There are occasions which justify silence, but none which warrant dissimulation. "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man." "Let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil."

9. Devout seriousness in the worship of God.

We must seriously prepare for God's worship. "Keep thy foot when thou goest unto the house of God." "Let a man examine himself." Thoughtless rushing into the presence of God, such as no one would venture to practise towards men of higher rank and station, is a flagrant breach of this command.—We must set apart a suitable and sufficient portion of time for God's worship, and this in the closet, and in the family, as well as in the sanctuary; that the engagement may not be subject to unnecessary interruptions, nor require to be so hurried as to prevent seriousness.—This command requires all such previous arrangement of our worldly affairs as shall leave undisturbed the hours of Divine worship.—We must regularly and punctually attend to the various ordinances of God's worship, "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner



of some is," nor carelessly disturbing the worship of others, and destroying the solemnity of the occasion, by entering after the worship has commenced.—We must seriously engage in God's worship. "He is to be had in reverence of all them that are round about him." "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving." All levity and trifling, whether in the heart, or in the look, or with the tongue; all losing sight of the great object and design of worship, and the indulgence of any affection which is not in entire unison with its high and holy character, is an insult offered to the great object of worship.—This command requires also serious meditation after worship. We must join watchfulness with prayer; must labour rightly to improve mercies, after acknowledging them; must search the Scriptures daily, as the only test of truth, and rule of practice; and employ ourselves in fixed and holy efforts to maintain habitual seriousness of spirit, in the devout recognition of Jehovah's presence; otherwise, our services are but profane mockery of his dreadful name.

10. Resigned acquiescence in the allotments of his Providence.

The outward circumstances of our condition are so plainly the appointments of God, that they distinctly intimate what his will concerning us is, and require prompt, cheerful, entire acquiescence in them, as intimations of his authority; to refuse such acquiescence is to put a slight on his name, whether the refusal appear in discontented, but suppressed feelings, in murmuring words, in prey-



ing anxiety, or in open opposition. "Let your deportment be free from anxious carefulness, and be content with such things as ye have; for he hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." The prayer of Agur breathes the spirit of obedience to this precept; Eli and Job, Paul and Christ, have left us an example of such obedience. "Not my will, but thine be done." "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."

11. Open profession that we are influenced by the fear of God.

Our actions are performed in the sight of the Great God, for whose glory we are to live. It is therefore required of us to walk worthy of God in all holiness, righteousness, and truth; boldly acknowledging his name, although there may be many adversaries; and seeking his glory, although there may be much opposition; abstaining even from the appearance of evil, that our separation from "the course of this world," may be the more marked and decisive, and pursuing the great objects of the Messiah's reign, so as to show that for us "to live is Christ." Not to show ourselves thus visibly and fully on the Lord's side, is practically to be ashamed of Him, and to slight his infinite claims.

II. The Impiety or Profaneness forbidden by this commandment, is seen in the circumstances which are immediately opposite to those by which we have described the reverence which it requires. There are, however, some flagrant

breaches of this command, which must be more fully exposed ; such as—

1. Levity of character.

Under this particular must be included, first of all, the carelessness which rejects the claims of God and of religion, without openly opposing or denying them. Nothing is more common than this ; it is the damning sin of thousands ; yet it is not perhaps viewed as a breach of the third commandment. Its guilt by this test is manifest ; for it neglects the serious study of his name ; it despises the awful importance of his authority ; it contemptuously disregards the paramount claims of his glory. The gay and thoughtless votaries of fashion, in whose minds the thoughts of God find no place ; the frivolous and trifling lovers of worldly amusement, whose hearts revolt at serious things ; the plodding, anxious men of business, who can find no time for the sober realities of religion ; the eager devotees of pleasure, and sensual gratification, who despise the fear of God as a gloomy and melancholy thing ; the sceptical men of science and literature, who rest in second causes, and lose sight of God and his claims, even whilst they search out the wonders of his works ; and the mere professors of religion, who hear the word of the Lord, but regard it not ; who have a Bible, but study it not ; who witness the pious zeal of God's people, but imitate it not ; who are perpetually reminded of the claims of God, of the value of the soul, and of the importance of eternity, but who set not their

hearts to these things, may read their guilt, and see their danger, as they hear their Maker say, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain." Their levity of character is an open contempt of the Greatness of God.

2. Profaneness of speech:—Of this evil, there are many varieties.

The needless and irreverent use of the name of God, may be first mentioned. Whether it be an angry or a thoughtless appeal which men make to the Almighty; whether it imprecate curses, or implore blessings, on their bodies, or on their souls; on their friends, or on their foes; on the brute creation, or on things without life; or, whether it be a mere expletive thrown in without meaning, the effect of habit, or the expression of supposed importance and dignity, it is a fearful contempt of the Divine power and glory. Oh! if God's justice were as ready to consume sinners as they are to pray for its inflictions, what numbers would perish daily at his feet, the monuments of his wrath!—All appeals to God for the truth of our statements on mere frivolous and trifling occasions, are breaches of this commandment. Such phrases as—God knows that it is so;—I'll take my oath of it; or, by way of rendering the asseveration stronger, and thereby making the profaneness more profane,—my Sacrament oath, that it is so, are instances of awful trifling with the name of God.—Unholy and trifling asseverations, in which the name of God is not

actually used, are equally guilty. Such are these ; Bless my soul ; upon my word ; upon my honour ; —phrases too often used without thought or consideration, but found, when examined, to involve a profane appeal to the Deity. The thoughtless and irreverent use of the name of God, even in a lawful connexion, and all irreverent and trifling discoursing on Divine subjects, are also profane. Thoughtlessly, and without corresponding pious emotions, to give utterance to the sacred names of God, whether in prayer, or in conversation ; to make a taunt of religion, or a jest of the pious ; to trifle with the character or reputation of God's people ; to speak slightly of the word of God, the ordinances of religion, or the ministers of the sanctuary, is to insult God in those things by which he makes himself known. There might be added here, Lying ; whether it be a flat denial of the truth, or the invention of something that is not true ; or equivocation, or misrepresentation, or deficient statement, or careless addition to the truth, it is a species of profaneness ; a practical insult to the Greatness of God.

### 3. Perjury.

“ Because of swearing,” *perjury*, “ this land mourneth.” If it be lawful, in order to make an end of all strife, to swear on some great and solemn occasions, it is certainly not lawful to swear on many, if not on most of the occasions on which oaths are now administered and taken ; and that in most, if not in all instances, the ends of civil justice would be equally promoted by solemn affirmations, are posi-

tions the truth of which is now extensively acknowledged. Certain it is that all unnecessary oaths transgress this commandment; and how many such, alas! are mixed up with the municipal and commercial regulations of this country! Who does not, or at least, ought not to blush to read the constable's oath, the churchwarden's oath, the magistrate's oath? Are they ever meant to be practically regarded? Is it even possible to perform them? And how many oaths are taken in commercial life which are worse than mere forms?—False oaths transgress this command; they are an appeal to the Omniscient God to attest the truth of a lie.—Oaths taken in ignorance, whether of the nature of an oath, or of the particular documents or facts sworn to, are also perjury. Flagrant instances of this kind may be met with every day at the Custom-House, and every session at the Universities<sup>1</sup>.—Oaths taken for the sake of gain, if even true, are also an awful trifling with the great name of God; and oaths taken with double meaning and mental reservation are equally guilty. Thus saith the Lord Jesus, “Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor! Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold? And, whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the

<sup>1</sup> Since this was written, many oaths have been abolished, and others will soon follow.

gift that is upon it, he is guilty. Ye fools and blind; for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift? Whoso therefore shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon. And whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein. And he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon." Matt. xxiii. 16—22. —Oaths taken as a mere matter of form are also guilty, and on the same grounds. "Thus saith the Lord, Ye shall not swear by my name falsely; neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God; I am the Lord." And the neglect to perform oaths incurs the same condemnation; "Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform to the Lord thine oaths."

4. Gaming is a profane appeal to the providence of God, by which this precept is transgressed; whether it be to superintend an unlawful project, and direct it to our welfare, or to secure to us a real good, by wrong means.

This is one of the crying sins of Britain, and pervades all classes of the community, from the man of wealth, and influence, and station, who can stake his thousands, to the idle boy that plays in the street, and bets or tosses his pence. At the card-table, and in the billiard-room; on the exchange, and on the race-course; in private, and in public; on the small scale of petty wagers and the large scale of commercial speculations, profane appeals are constantly made to the supreme and universal power of God, in which dissatisfaction



with his arrangements is expressed, opposition to his will declared, and awful trifling with his greatness exhibited.

5. Blasphemy also reproaches God, by denying or ridiculing his Great name.

Such is the denial of his being, as when “the fool says, there is no God;” of his attributes, as when men say, “How doth God know, and is there knowledge with the Most High?” of his government, as when sinners proudly ask, “What is the Almighty, that we should serve him?”—Such is the denial of the Divine nature and incarnation of the Son of God; “Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God;”—such is the ascription of the miraculous power of God to Satanic agency; this, when maliciously indulged, our Lord declared to be the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost:—such is the denial of the inspiration of the Scriptures, or of the veracity of its contents; as when scoffers ask, Hath the Lord indeed spoken, or “Where is the promise of his coming?”—such are all hard thoughts of God, as when the careless attempt to excuse their guilt, saying, “He is a hard master;” and all impious thoughts of God, as when the wicked harden themselves in sin, saying, “Where is the God of judgment?”—and, such is all the ridicule, sometimes poured on religion and religious things; as when the inconsistencies of professors are charged to the account of religion, although they are plainly and severely condemned by it; as when the afflictions of the righteous are made an occasion of reproach to them or to their reli-

gion, as it is contemptuously asked, "Where is now your God?"

6. Superstition also despises or profanes the name of God.

To be "righteous over much," to give a religious regard to things that are unworthy of it, supposes that the just requirements of God are not sufficient, and therefore we must add something thereto. The traditions of the Jews were of this character; so are also the idolatries of the heathen, the fooleries of Popery, the many prayers of Mahometans, and the unscriptural rites which are sometimes blended with the purer worship of Protestants. To this head must be referred the arts of astrology, magic, juggling, witchcraft,—the notion of charms and omens,—the doctrine of ghosts and apparitions,—the interpretation of dreams, and of strange impressions on the mind. Here too must be reckoned the idea of lucky and unlucky days and hours; and under the Christian dispensation, the distinction of holy days and holy places; and the vain dependence placed by many on the rite of baptism, as the instrument of regeneration, and on the Lord's Supper, administered at the hour of death as a passport to heaven.

7. Hypocrisy is a profane trifling with the name of God.

Whether this be mere insincerity cherished in the heart, or false pretences put forth in the life, it insults the omniscience of God, as if he did not know the truth; the omnipresence of God, as if we had escaped from his eye; the authority of God, as if he had no right to our hearts; the

power of God, as if his arm were too weak to take vengeance on our iniquities; the justice of God, as if nothing were to be feared from his wrath; and the mercy of God, as if his forbearance had laid us under no obligations, and as if his forgiveness were of no value.

8. Unbelief also ranks among the flagrant breaches of this command.

If there be one species of trifling with "that great and dreadful name, the Lord our God," which above all others is offensive and guilty—it is unbelief;—unbelief, which makes God a liar; as in one instance it fears to believe his promises, and in another dares to dispute his threatenings, and, in multitudes of instances, seeks excuses for not obeying his commands, and embracing his Gospel. Let the unbelieving sinner who stands aloof from the grace of Jesus ponder this, that "God will not hold him guiltless who taketh his name in vain."

III. The special motive by which obedience to this command is enforced, is a solemn declaration of God's determination to visit disobedience with merited punishment.

Many breaches of this command are altogether overlooked; but God is acquainted with every secret thought, affection, and motive, which trifles with his name. The guilt of many transgressions against this precept is greatly underrated by men; they are accounted and treated as mere venial sins, but God estimates the guilt by his own infinite glory. Men too often boast themselves in their impiety; but thus saith the

Lord, "The Lord will not hold him guiltless who taketh his name in vain." His Justice requires that he *should* not; his faithfulness implies that he *will* not; his power declares that he *can* not "hold him guiltless who taketh his name in vain;" and facts prove that he *does* not. Let profane sinners review the history of his government, and tremble for their safety. Cain refused to entertain the fear of God, and was doomed to perpetual infamy. Lot's wife looked behind her, and was changed into a pillar of salt. Nadab and Abihu offered strange fire before the Lord, and perished in his presence. Korah and his company despised the authority of God as reposed in his servants, and the earth swallowed them up. The Israelitish woman's son blasphemed the name of the Lord, and he was stoned, by Divine command, without the camp. Young men insulted God in the person of his prophet Elisha, and bears tore them in pieces. Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and there he died. King Uzziah would burn incense upon the altar of incense, and was wroth with the priests; and he became a leper unto the day of his death. Nebuchadnezzar's heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride; and he was driven from among men until seven times had passed over him. Ananias and Sapphira lied unto the Holy Ghost; and they fell down dead at the Apostles' feet. Herod gave not God the glory, and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost. Elymas the sorcerer withstood the Apostles, and sought to turn away the deputy from the faith, and the

hand of the Lord was upon him, and smote him with blindness. Eutychus lost sight of the presence and claims of God, and sunk down into a deep sleep while Paul preached; and he fell from the third loft, and was taken up dead. Nor have such instances of present retribution altogether ceased from the earth. In like manner, God sometimes shows his righteousness, and takes vengeance even now. But who shall describe the strange punishment of eternal fire which awaits the ungodly hereafter? "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." "All have sinned, and come short of his glory." "Who shall stand when he appeareth?"

"To the dear fountain of thy blood,  
Incarnate God! I fly;  
Here let me wash my spotted soul,  
From crimes of deepest dye."

## THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT.

---

EXODUS XX. 8—11.

“Remember the sabbath-day to keep it holy: Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath-day, and hallowed it.”

THIS precept assumes the right of God to be openly acknowledged by his creatures, in suitable expressions of homage and acts of worship, and requires the sanctification of a seventh portion of time to this end. The general principle on which the command proceeds, is summed up in one word, “This people have I formed for myself; they shall *show forth* my praise.”

I. The first question which requires to be settled in expounding this command, relates to the perpetuity of the obligation. It is sometimes said that the law of the Sabbath appertains only to the Mosaic Economy, and was abrogated along with it; and that as there is no renewed command for



its observance in the New Testament, it is not now of Divine obligation, however it may be a matter of human expediency, or Christian advantage. It is thought, on the other hand, that the perpetual Divine obligation may be clearly shown; and in proof of this the following considerations are offered :

1. The moral nature of the institution implies it.

It is not merely positive, having no foundation in the nature of things, but originating wholly in the appointment of God, constituting that a duty which would not otherwise have been so. To perceive this, it is only necessary to give a slight degree of attention to that which is required ; it is the open acknowledgment of the Divine claims, in such religious services as he may appoint. It is unquestionably the duty of men to worship God irrespective of any command to this effect ; and it is equally their duty to worship him as his nature and perfections demand, “ in spirit and in truth.” They must consequently devote to this object such portion of time as may be necessary for the suitable discharge of the duty, both as it regards the advantage to be reaped by themselves, and the honour to accrue to his name. *Thus* to serve God, is a moral duty. It is simply the homage which is due to his being and authority ; and the obligation to pay it rests equally on all mankind. When the law was given, it was not more the duty of a Jew, than it was of a Gentile, and it is at this hour equally the duty of every man to celebrate the perfections of God, and to acknow-

ledge, with corresponding emotions, and in due expressions, his obligations to the great Supreme. Further; The nature and advantages of social existence require the social acknowledgment of the claims and glory of God; the worship of God by a family is a natural obligation; and in a community where all are united in a common relation, and derive common advantages, it is not less their duty, and on the same common principles, to unite in his worship. This again implies the separation of some portion of time to the object; and the portion so separated must be adequate to the occasion, such as will most effectually secure the right discharge of the duty. The obligation to public worship, then, is inseparable from the public relations in which the members of a community severally stand to each other, and each to the whole. God is a common Father, and common benefits demand one general tribute of praise. The proportion of time, is therefore the only thing left to arbitrary determination. This God has mercifully fixed, appointing one day in seven to be thus employed. Without such an appointment, men would never have agreed as to the right proportion; and therefore there never would have been any union of service; or if, by any chance, they had agreed, as under some circumstances, such as the commencement of the new world, when there were but eight persons, it is barely possible that they might; their arrangements would have wanted authority, and some would soon have disregarded it. That there is nothing purely moral in the exact propor-

tion determined upon is admitted ; i. e. for aught we know to the contrary, it might have been as properly a fifth or a tenth, instead of a seventh. But the determination is that of Infinite Wisdom, and we cannot suppose that God was not actuated by moral reasons ; we feel, therefore, that it is the best proportion which could have been selected ; and that the terms moral and positive, have not so much to do with God's appointments, considered in themselves, as with our modes of viewing them. Now, at least, that we know the best mode of discharging the obligation to which our natural circumstances and common relations bind us, the adoption of that mode is as much a moral duty, as if the proportion of time had been necessarily involved in the nature of the obligation itself, or had been discovered by the experimental inquiries of men, anxious to discharge that obligation. It were easy to show, further, that every end contemplated by the law of the Sabbath, is a moral one, of universal application and benefit ; but it is unnecessary ; having shown that the thing required is of moral obligation, and that what is positive in the command, is so of necessity, since God alone could determine it ; it only remains to state that this law being moral, is of perpetual obligation ;— It regulates the expression of that love to God which all admit to be a universal duty.

2. The argument for the perpetuity is further inferred from the original appointment of the Sabbath.

The opening language of the fourth com-

mandment plainly contemplates the Sabbath as already in existence. It does not require something new, but demands continued attention to something old; "*Remember the sabbath-day.*" It refers us back to the original appointment. This took place in Eden; and the design was to commemorate the completion of the work of creation, and the glorious rest of God when he viewed with complacency the works he had made. To say that the historian speaks proleptically of the Jewish Sabbath, is utterly at variance with every principle of sound criticism, and every necessary property of faithful history, not to say, of Divine Revelation. "The sabbath was made for man," as man, and the duties to which it obliges are common to all men; the record is, "On the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it; because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made." It had not to do, therefore, with any dispensation separately taken, but with man and his posterity. It may be added, that there is no way of accounting for the division of time into weeks of seven days, which has prevailed from the beginning, but by admitting the fact that the Sabbath was appointed from the beginning.

3. The terms in which the observance of the Sabbath is enjoined in the fourth commandment, deserve notice in this inquiry.

Exceptions have been taken to the moral cha-

racter of the fourth commandment, as if its sole design was to appoint the *seventh day* as the Sabbath. There appears to be considerable mistake on this point; since it only appoints the proportion of time, and assumes a knowledge of the particular day, or leaves this to be otherwise determined. Mark the language; “Remember the sabbath-day,” not the seventh day, “to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work; but the seventh day,” the day after six days of labour, “is the sabbath of the Lord thy God;” “for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the *sabbath*-day, and hallowed it.” The spirit of the precept is, Remember the obligation to devote every seventh day, after six days of worldly labour, to the public acknowledgment of the glory and claims of the Lord your God, and observe it in this manner, by abstinence from certain worldly employments, and pursuit of certain religious objects. The command therefore is moral, implying and recognising a perpetual obligation, and awakening attention to it; the particular day of the week is to be learnt from other sources. A question arises here, Was the Sabbath known to the Israelites at the time when the law of Sinai was given? It is replied, Yes; for although the traces of its continued observance from the beginning are not numerous, yet they are sufficient; the frequent reference to seven days, as a division of time, and this often in connexion with religion, cannot otherwise be ex-

plained; but besides this, there is one striking fact in proof of the observance of the Sabbath by the Israelites, prior to the giving of the law, and the incidental recital of the fact, and without any note of explanation, but regarding it as a simple matter of course, strengthens greatly the importance and value of the proof; it occurs *Exod. xvi. 22—30.*; and it proves both the general knowledge of the Sabbath, and the observance of the day appointed at the beginning. “And it came to pass, that on the sixth day, they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for one man: and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses. And he said unto them, This is that which the Lord hath said, To-morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the Lord; bake that which ye will bake to-day, and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over, lay up for you to be kept until the morning. And they laid it up till the morning, as Moses bade: and it did not stink, neither was there any worm therein. And Moses said, eat that to-day; for to-day is a sabbath unto the Lord; for to-day ye shall not find it in the field. Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is the sabbath, in it there shall be none. And it came to pass, that there went out some of the people on the seventh day for to gather, and they found none. And the Lord said unto Moses, How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws? See, for that the Lord hath given you the sabbath, therefore he giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days; abide ye every man in his place, let



no man go out of his place on the seventh day. So the people rested on the seventh day."

4. The place occupied by this commandment, gives additional strength to this argument.

On the supposition that the law of the Sabbath belonged only to the Mosaic Economy, it is more than strange to find it in the very midst of the Decalogue; had it been at the beginning or at the end, it might have been more easily considered an interpolation. All the other nine precepts are admitted to be universally binding, and that this is the genuine tenth, no one disputes. It was given under the same solemn circumstances; it is included in the number of commandments, so often spoken of as the Law of God, by way of eminence, and as distinguished from the ceremonial institutes of Moses; like all the rest, it was twice written by the finger of God on the tables of stone, and by his command deposited in the ark. Is it supposable, then, that there is nothing moral in its nature, nor universal in its aspect, nor perpetual in its obligation? Who will dare to charge on God such an anomaly?

5. Various passages of Scripture distinctly imply the perpetuity of the Sabbath.

The following prophecy by Isaiah may be first instanced; it can be explained only of the New Testament Dispensation, and it speaks of the observance of the Sabbath, and of its continued separation to the public worship of God, ch. lvi. 6—8. "Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the Lord, to serve him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be his servants, every

one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant; even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar, for mine house shall be called a house of prayer for all people. The Lord God which gathereth the outcasts of Israel, saith, Yet will I gather others to him, beside those that are gathered unto him."

In the following passage too from the Psalms, cxviii. 19—26; a passage expressly applied to Christ and Christianity in the New Testament; the observance of the Sabbath as a day set apart to the service and worship of God, is distinctly spoken of. "Open to me the gates of righteousness; I will go into them, and I will praise the Lord: this gate of the Lord, into which the righteous shall enter. I will praise thee, for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation. The stone which the builders refused is become the head-stone of the corner. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes. This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it. Save now, I beseech thee, O Lord. O Lord, I beseech thee, send now prosperity. Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord: we have blessed you out of the house of the Lord."

Our Lord Jesus Christ says, "The sabbath was made for man;" not for Jew or Gentile; not for the patriarch, not for the Christian, but for *man*. And when addressing his disciples on the ap-

proaching calamities of Judæa, he spake of the continued observance of the Sabbath, saying to them, "Pray ye, that your flight be not in the winter, nor on the sabbath-day." Other New Testament passages will come under notice below. These are sufficient to show that the Scriptures by their general tenor, regard the Sabbath as a perpetual institution.

II. A second point to be settled, is the authority for the observance of the first day of the week as the New Testament Sabbath.

The original appointment was, as we have seen, of the *seventh* day, "because that in it God had rested from all his work which he had created and made." The same day of the week was re-appointed under the Mosaic economy, with this more special object; "remember that thou wast a stranger in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand, and by a stretched out arm; therefore the Lord thy God commandeth thee to keep the sabbath day." This new object did not destroy the binding force of the original one; for it can never cease to be the duty of intelligent creatures to commemorate the perfections of God as displayed in his works; but it showed that there might be some changes as to the particular observance, whilst the moral character of the general obligation remained the same. It is distinctly taught in the prophets, that this special object of commemoration should not always be perpetuated as the thing of chief importance; but that it should give place to another, even

whilst the Jewish peculiarities were perpetuated. Jer. xvi. 14, 15. "Therefore, behold the days come, saith the Lord, that it shall no more be said, The Lord liveth, that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; but the Lord liveth, that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the lands whither he had driven them: and I will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers."

We have already seen that there is nothing in the fourth commandment itself, perpetuating the obligation of any particular day. The original design is equally gained by observing any day which occurs after an interval of six days' labour, and the spirit of the fourth command accords therewith. The change made in the commencement of the Jewish year, to secure a religious regard to their national separation, is a case in which we have a special accommodation, so to speak, of moral obligation to particular circumstances; such as is supposed to be the case in the observance of the first day to celebrate the finishing of the work of redemption.—Besides, they who are so scrupulous about the day, forget that the frame of the world renders it impossible for the whole of its inhabitants to keep one identical day. It is said, that there is no express precept appointing the first day of the week as the Christian sabbath. To this, which is the fact, it is replied, that the mind and will of God, concerning any duty to be performed by us, may be sufficiently revealed in his word, without a

particular precept, in so many terms, enjoining it. It is sufficient that we can ascertain the fact that the change from the seventh day to the first, was effected under his authority; the mode in which we should be made acquainted with this fact, it was his sole prerogative to determine.

The circumstances of the proof then, are shortly these:—the historian of the Acts of the Apostles plainly teaches, that the first Christians assembled together for Divine worship on the first day of the week, the day of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul passing from Philippi to Jerusalem touched at Troas, and seems to have stayed there seven days, in order that he might be with the church on the sabbath, ch. xx. 6, 7. “And we sailed away from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread, and came unto them to Troas in five days; where we abode seven days. And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow, and continued his speech until midnight.” Two similar instances are mentioned, for which it is difficult to account on any other principle: “Finding disciples” (says Luke) “we tarried there seven days,” namely at Tyre; and again at Puteoli, “Where we found brethren, and were *desired to tarry* with them *seven* days: and so we went toward Rome,” ch. xxi. 4; xxviii. 14. The apostle writing to the Corinthians exhorts them to make the first day of every week the day for casting into the treasury (θησαυριζων), according as they might have prospered; and he urges as a reason for

this arrangement that he has given like directions to other churches; nor must it be overlooked that in the same epistle, he commends the disciples for "keeping the ordinances as he had delivered them unto them," and declares that "That which he had received of the Lord, he had delivered unto them." The name, "Lord's-day," occurring, Rev. i. 10, shows that the particular day spoken of was then well known by this appellation, and can be fairly interpreted only of the day set apart for *his* glory and worship, who is so often styled "the Lord," in the New Testament; as the phrase the Lord's Supper designates the ordinance for celebrating the death of the Lord Jesus. The apostles acted under the authority of Jesus who is "Lord also of the sabbath;" they were endowed with the Spirit of God that they might rightly establish the faith and order of the churches; it is plain that they were very careful not to sanction any practice in the churches which were not supported by the authority of Christ; they plainly did sanction the observance of the first day of the week as a sabbath; it cannot, therefore, be questioned that the change took place under their direction, for the observance of the first-day sabbath has been universal from the apostolic age. Various collateral circumstances confirm this conclusion. The apostles declare the abrogation of the Jewish sabbath, classing it with new-moons, and holy-days. Our Lord lay in the grave during the Jewish sabbath, at which time the church could not rejoice on God's holy day; and he honoured the first day of the week by his



various appearances to his apostles after his resurrection, and by the gift of the Holy Ghost after his ascension. The tenderness in all respects shewn to Jewish scruples at the commencement of Christianity, designed doubtless, amongst other ends, to teach an impressive lesson of mutual forbearance, suggests an adequate reason for the comparative silence of the New Testament on this particular point. To these general statements, it is to be added that the language of the 118th Psalm, quoted above, as cited by Peter, Acts iv. 11, 12, must be considered as an express prediction that the day of our Lord's resurrection would be the New Testament sabbath. The apostle cites the 22d verse of the Psalm, and applies it to Jesus; "This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner." The Psalm proceeds "this is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes. This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it." In what other sense can it be said of any particular day, that the Lord hath made it, than in that of separation to a special and sacred object; and of what day can it be spoken, but of that on which was consummated the work of redemption and the glory of Christ? Some eminent men think that the passage respecting the "rest," or sabbath keeping which occurs in Heb. iv. 1—11, is mainly designed to prove the first-day sabbath. Be this as it may (the passage is confessedly difficult), the argument implies the perpetuity of the sabbath, from which an allusion is borrowed to set forth the

glory of the heavenly rest, and to stimulate to the pursuit of it.

III. Having then proved the perpetual obligation of the sabbath, and furnished an outline of the argument on which the authority of the first-day sabbath depends, we now proceed to state the nature of the Holy Rest in which the Divine claims are to be acknowledged.

This command does not suppose that the other six days of the week are to be so employed about worldly things as to exclude religious services. The glory of God must be sought, and the worship of God presented every day. We are commanded to "pray without ceasing, and in every thing give thanks." We are to be "diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;" and every pious man, and every pious family will so arrange their worldly business as to find some portions of time every day to devote immediately to the service of God. But the sabbath is appointed as a day for God, over and above all the time which is employed in his service on other days, to be entirely and exclusively employed in acts of religion. A day is to be *kept holy*: not spent in idleness, but employed in active piety; a *whole day*; not a few hours only which may be spent in public, or a day made as short as it can be, by a late commencement and an early close, but a seventh portion of our time; a day as long as any active day of business,—as large a proportion of the twenty-four hours as our nature duly trained to the work of God and rightly aided in it can give. If God love mercy, and not sacrifice, this should stimulate us to the most

zealous and active energy in his service, and not be made an excuse for indolence and sin. Isaiah has thus described the spirit in which the sabbath should be kept; "If thou run away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day: and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words; then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord." And John says, "I was in the spirit on the Lord's day;" into this *spirit* we now inquire.—Its characteristic features are:—

1. Cessation from every thing secular and worldly.

Not only does this command forbid that which is in itself, and on every day sinful, but also the employments and pleasures which are lawful on other days; from which we are commanded to cease that we may have a day in which publicly to express our regard to God. This prohibition relates to the soul as well as to the body; it applies to all stations and circumstances of life; and, it has to do with all the business, and with all the pleasure of the world. No worldly business is to be transacted; no conversation on worldly business is to be indulged; no plans for its prosecution are on the sabbath to be laid; no thoughts respecting it are willingly to be cherished; no entrenchment on the sacred hours is to be allowed, by protracting the business of Saturday to so late a period, as to interfere with the repose which should prepare for the sabbath; and no portion

of the day is to be made a convenience *to*, or to be occupied *in* arrangements for the business of the Monday. In the kitchen, and in the parlour;—in the house, and in the field; in the walks of science, as well as in the labours of mechanical life; at home and abroad, we must cease from our own works; and the cessation must be total, that our sons, and our daughters, our servants, and our cattle, may rest as well as we. The like remarks apply to worldly pleasure; whether it be the gratification of the eye, or of the ear, or of the appetite; whether it be individual enjoyment, or social festivity. However innocent may be the recreation on another day, or however important the object of pursuit, it is never to be forgotten that religion is the business of the sabbath; and that whatever is not included in the acknowledgment of God's claims, and required in due attention to them, is sinful on God's day.

An exception is of course to be taken for all works of necessity; such as the feeding and taking care of cattle; but this must not be made an excuse for the neglect of religion;—the provision of such moderate sustenance as shall support and assist the animal frame in the exercises of religion; but every thing more than is necessary to this end is sinful; the sabbath is a holy fast, not a carnal festival;—the attentions required by the sick; but this again must not unnecessarily interfere with the religious exercises of the day; nor must advantage be taken of the day to do that under cover of necessity which might, and therefore ought to be done on another day. The old rule

is a good one, that which cannot be done on a Saturday, nor left undone until Monday, may be done on the sabbath. The plea of necessity which is founded on the circumstance of saving time for worldly business, is one of the most aggravated violations of this precept. It is to rob God of that which is his, in order to save what is our own, and is condemned by our Lord, when he says, "He that will save his life, shall lose it."

An exception may sometimes require to be taken also in reference to those persons in subordinate and dependent stations, who may not be able to do as they would in this respect. These parties should never forget, however, that they are bound to do all they can to secure in themselves a due observance of the sabbath. A little prudent foresight and contrivance, will often do much to abate the evil of which they may justly complain, and increase to them the rest of the sabbath; and what cannot be mitigated or avoided, must be patiently endured. At the same time, if such persons have the opportunity of freeing themselves from the circumstances that require the breach of the sabbath, it is their duty to avail themselves of it.

The instances in which these claims of the sabbath are disregarded, are too numerous and diversified to admit of specification. From the highest circles in the land, where there have been cabinet councils, and cabinet dinners on the Lord's day, to the lowest cottagers who receive the Sunday newspaper, and convert the day of God into a season of dissipation and riotous discussion of the

politics of the times, through all the intervening grades and classes of society, business in its varied forms usurps the place of religion, and desecrates the day of God. The streets of our cities, and the lanes of our villages are alike crowded with men, women, and children, who on foot, and on horseback, and in all kinds of vehicles, seek their own pleasure on God's holy day; and even our rivers are not exempted from furnishing their quota of sabbath amusement. Nor are the professors of religion free from guilt in this matter. Whilst some make a worldly convenience of religion, and of the sabbath, and are ever ready with a frivolous excuse for their neglect of its ordinances, and others are running continually after some new thing, many are sanctioning the evil by their worldly conformity, and by most it is contemplated with no small share of indifference and unconcern.

## 2. Cultivation of personal and family religion.

Cessation from worldly business and pleasure is the mere negative observance of the day. There are those who do this, and yet lounge away the day in idleness, or employ it in general reading, or social frivolity, and are equally guilty of treating it irreligiously. The day is to be employed in the cultivation of religious knowledge and impression. The Bible is to be studied, that the mind and will of God may be known. Prayer is to be offered, that by communion with God every Divine principle may be strengthened. Praise is to be tendered for the mercies which are enjoyed. The mind is to be occupied in meditating on the great



truths of God ; and the state of the heart is to be subjected to strict examination. For whilst the other days of the week are so occupied with worldly pursuits as to leave but little time for religion, the sabbath is expressly instituted for purposes of holy fasting and prayer, that full attention may be given to the claims of the soul, and of eternity.

Family religion should also be sedulously cultivated on the sabbath. The exercises of family worship may be longer, and the instruction of the children more full, and on this day *only* religious. Set religious services in the family on the sabbath are highly valuable ; they are exactly in the spirit of the day, and have often been greatly honoured and blessed of God. It may be fairly questioned how far the almost universal introduction of sermons on the Lord's day evenings instead of the afternoon, and the numerous and various walks of active usefulness into which the young are carried out, have really compensated for the loss of that systematic and familiar instruction of which our fathers have told us as characteristic of their sabbath evenings at home.

3. Observance of the ordinances of public worship.

- This is the grand object of the day, for which all the private exercises of religion should prepare, and to which every thing in the arrangements of the day should be subordinated. On this day, the assemblies of the church are to be convened, and the ordinances of its public worship celebrated according to Christ's appointment. United prayer

and praise, the public reading and exposition of the sacred word, and the communion of the Lord's Table, are the services in which this day is to be devoted to the glory of God. The frequency with which these assemblies shall be convened, and the specific order in which their worship shall be conducted, are points which are left to be determined by general circumstances.

It is equally required by this command that these various ordinances be observed in a proper spirit. It is not the outward formality, but the inward devotion of the heart that renders them acceptable to God. The attention that is required is a holy attention, conscientious in principle, regular in habit, devout in manner, and cheerful in spirit. Entrance into God's house after the worship has begun; levity, inattention, formality, conversation, sleeping during the period of its continuance; and needless departure before the service has closed, are alike incompatible with the holiness that becometh the house and service of Jehovah.

#### 4. Efforts to do good to the souls of men.

The sabbath is perpetuated for the propagation as well as the improvement of religion. On it, the ignorant and those who are out of the way are to be instructed in the things that pertain to the kingdom of heaven, every opportunity is to be seized, and every variety of effort employed in order to this end. Whether, therefore, the young may be taught to read and understand the word of God, or the careless of matured age, invited to attend the ministry of the sanctuary; or the sab-

bath-breaker warned of the danger of his career ; or the Gospel preached to them who have not heard it, the command requires the employment of these efforts, and it is broken by the neglect of them.

IV. Special injunctions commend this precept to our obedience.

1. Authority is delegated respecting its observance.

It is addressed to *heads of families*, who are commanded to keep holy the day, and to see that it is kept by their respective households. The *children* are not to be allowed to break its holy rest by their play, or by pursuing their general education on this day ; much less, by their needless absence from public worship when capable of attending it ; but they are to be trained in that religious regard to the day which comports with its design, and employed in those studies, and in those only which directly tend to promote their piety. The *servants* are not to be allowed, much less, required to violate its sanctity by unnecessary work, or by taking their own pleasure on God's day, or by absenting themselves from public worship. Their cessation from worldly labour must be as complete as circumstances will admit, and their opportunities of spiritual improvement as numerous as they can with propriety be made. The command speaks also of *cattle*. These must not be employed for any purposes of worldly business or carnal pleasure ; but only to aid the works of piety and mercy, which are the great object of the day. Yea, to *strangers* also the

precept reaches ; and certainly forbids the entertaining on this day of such persons as will not conform to the established order of a pious family, and concur in its movements for the Divine glory. It requires us to conduct them to the house of prayer, and to furnish them with the means of sanctifying the day according to God's appointment.

The question as to the right of the civil magistrate to interfere in the observance of the sabbath, is of somewhat difficult solution. His office is political, not religious. If he meddle with religion, so far as to enforce attention to its services by civil penalties, he steps out of his province, and brings religion into contempt by reducing it to a mere matter of worldly legislation. His sole province, is to protect his subjects in the free and undisturbed discharge of their religious duties. If under any circumstances he can proceed beyond this, it is to secure the leisure of a day in a state where a decided majority of the citizens demand it. As a man, the weight of his example and influence are properly employed to enforce religious practices ; but these are the moral means by which every pious man is bound to seek the due observance of the day.

2. Attention is demanded to the claims of the sabbath.

The opening word of the commandment bespeaks attention ; “ *Remember* the sabbath day to keep it holy.”—Prepare for it on Saturday, by such previous arrangement of all worldly matters as shall leave the mind undisturbed, and by such

season of retirement as shall cherish the spirit of devotion in which its hours should be spent.—Rise early on the sabbath morning; that its first and best moments may be sanctified to God, and that the religion of the closet may give a high tone of piety to the worship of the sanctuary.—Maintain a spirit of holy watchfulness during its progress; that no irreverent levity may displace the spirit of holy fellowship, nor any seductive temptation withdraw the affections from the Lord of the sabbath.—Close the day well; by reviewing its engagements, recalling its instructions, and renewing its impressions; by repenting of its sins, repeating its petitions, and recording its resolutions;—close it, in solemn thanksgivings for its distinguishing privileges, and in a devout effort to maintain the sense of its holy obligation.

3. Obedience is enforced by solemn sanctions.

The example of God is to be imitated. “HE finished his work which he created and made, and rested on the seventh day.”—The authority of God is to be obeyed. “HE blessed the sabbath day, and sanctified it.”—The completion of the work of redemption is to be celebrated; for “Jesus has entered into rest, having ceased from his work, as God also ceased from *his*.”—The heavenly rest is to be anticipated with humble faith and holy fear. “Let us, therefore, labour to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the Jewish example of unbelief.”

## THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT.

---

EXODUS xx. 12.

“ Honour thy father and thy mother : that thy days may be long upon the land, which the Lord thy God giveth thee.”

THIS commandment commences the second Table of the Law, which comprehensively declares our duty to ourselves and our fellow-men, and is summed up by our Saviour in this word, “ Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”

This first precept of the Second Table assumes the existence of the various relations of human society, and requires the right exercise of, and a proper regard to that authority which God has delegated to man in the several relations of human life ; of which the parental relation is naturally selected as the pattern. It is thus summed up by the New Testament, “ Render therefore to all their dues ; tribute to whom tribute is due ; custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour.” This latitude of interpretation has been called in question ; but it seems fully warranted. It is nothing more than the application to this command of the general principles upon which our Lord interpreted other precepts of the deca-



logue, and especially those of the Second Table. It is implied in the general summary of this table, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," and the parable of the good Samaritan teaches us in what sense our Lord would have us to understand the term neighbour. This mode of explanation is necessary to the perfection of the law; for if this precept do not admit of application to the several superior and subordinate relations of society, the decalogue has no precept which regulates them. The selection of the parental relation as a specimen of the rest is natural and proper. It is that on which we first enter, and the endearing obligations of which we feel almost from the very commencement of our life; and the spirit of this relation is that of consistent regard to every other: and by it men naturally judge of what is due to them in all relations. It is further worthy of remark, that the term *Father* is used in the Scriptures with considerable latitude being applied to almost every class of superior claims. Besides its most common and obvious reference, it is applied to superiors in age; "Rebuke not an elder, but intreat him as a father;"—to superiors in gifts; "Jabal was the father of husbandmen, and Jubal the father of musicians;"—to benefactors or superiors in usefulness; Joseph says, "God hath made me a father to Pharaoh;"—to superiors in station, as masters or heads of households; thus Naaman's servants said to him, "My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it?"—to superiors in office, as public instructors, thus

Elisha exclaimed at the ascent of Elijah, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof;"—to superiors in authority, as magistrates; hence it is said of Eliakim, "He shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem."—It being plain then that the fifth commandment is rightly viewed as a general directory of duty in all cases where mutual claims are implied, attention is due to the principles on which the command proceeds, the obedience required, and the promise annexed.

I. The principles on which the fifth commandment rests.

Man is formed for society. By the very constitution of his nature, he is a social being; and a variety of circumstances become the basis of mutual relations between man and man. The Creator formed man male and female, and thus originates the relation of husband and wife. The law of the propagation of our species gives birth to the relation of parent and child, and the successive operations of this law, to that of brother and sister. The multiplication of families, spreading over the face of a certain locality, and naturally becoming useful or prejudicial to each other, renders necessary some form of civil or political government, founded on the adoption of certain mutually recognised regulations for the preservation of the general purity and peace. The several varieties of human circumstances have their corresponding claims. Age has experience which gives it authority, and youth dependence which originates obligation. Natural talents, whether

of body or mind, gain an ascendancy in society proportioned to the vigour of their character, and the correctness of their appropriation; and mental acquirements raise man above his fellows, according to the degree of their eminence and utility. Wealth is always power, and superior rank or station confers corresponding influence. The accumulation of capital gives superiority, and requires the employment of those who are in inferior stations, and the application of their power to help others, is to themselves a source of maintenance and happiness. Thus the social character of man originates relations, all of which beget a mutual dependence and obligation.

This connexion amongst men is of Divine appointment. It is the immediate result of his purpose and plan; and, if on the one hand, the arrangement present a striking manifestation of his sovereignty, teaching us in all its departments, that "the potter hath power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another to dishonour;" nothing, on the other hand, could furnish a more interesting illustration of his wisdom, in adapting the means to the end, and in providing for the mutual advantage and happiness of men; for God has so put the frame-work of human society together, that all the parts are necessary; the strong cannot do without the weak, nor the weak without the strong: and so universal is the sympathy which pervades the whole, that it is impossible to say in what variety of outward circumstances, the preponderance of human happiness lies.

To these natural relations, God has added others, which arise out of the peculiarities of his moral government, as he has now adapted that government to the fallen condition of men. Such are those which subsist between the teachers of religion, and the taught; between "the partakers of the benefit," who believe in Jesus, and those who do not repent and turn to God in obedience to his Gospel.

In all these varied relations, the same principle of mutual claim and obligation obtains; and the rule of its exercise is its application to parents and children.

The pattern of conformity is the parental relation of God himself; his authority in his government, on the one hand, and the required spirit of subjection to him in his creatures, on the other. The former is marked by a universal superintendence and special direction, by a tender care and an ample provision, by kind instruction and faithful correction, which are to be copied by all who are in superiority and authority amongst men; and the latter is properly comprised in one word, "*Honour*," including Reverence and Love, Obedience and Gratitude.

The end immediately contemplated in this Divine arrangement, and following obedience to this command, is the well-being of individuals, and the settled order of society; "that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest live long on the earth."

It may be further observed here, that these general remarks apply to the whole of the Second

Table ; and that obedience to it is inseparable from a due regard to the First Table, and constitutes the proof of obedience to it. “ If any man love God, he will love his brother also ;” and on the contrary, “ If a man love not his brother whom he hath seen, how shall he love God whom he hath not seen ?” No pretensions, therefore, to the religious character required in the four commands of the First Table, are any further valid than they are supported by conformity to the six precepts of the Second ; and, on the other hand, no regard paid to the precepts of the Second Table is acceptable to God any further than it is based on the supreme love required by the First, and breathes the spirit of obedience to God whose authority reigns in the whole. The two tables are equally binding ; obedience to the one cannot therefore be substituted for obedience to the other.

II. The obedience required by the fifth commandment, must be set forth under the several relationships into which human society is divided.

1. The first and most intimate of human relations, is the conjugal relation, or that subsisting between man and wife.

Here at least it will be admitted that the great principle of connexion and happiness is love. The authority of the husband is that of love,—love, which bears with the infirmities, provides for the necessities, protects the person, and delights in the fellowship of his wife ; and which induces him to behave towards her with the greatest prudence and tenderness : and the submission of the wife

is that of love ;—love which leads her to help her husband in all matters to the extent of her ability, to reverence his opinion, and seek his comfort ; to cultivate the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit ; to bear patiently the cares and troubles of the marriage state, and to exercise all economy, and prudence in the management of domestic affairs. There is to be a oneness of feeling and plan, of object and effort, that nothing but love can produce, and in which every thing is to be subordinated to the glory of God, and the paramount claims of eternity. The nature and obligations of this relation are thus stated:—"Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church ; and he is the Saviour of the body. Therefore, as the Church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it." "So ought mento love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh ; but nourisheth and cherisheth it even as the Lord the Church ; for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery ; but I speak concerning Christ and the Church. Nevertheless, let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself ; and the wife see that she reverence her husband."



Eph. v. 22, 23. "Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands: that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement. Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered." 1 Pet. iii. 1—7.

Every thing contrary to this mutual esteem and regard to each other's welfare is of course forbidden in this relation. All unkindness of thought, word, and act;—all want of mutual confidence;—all unnecessary interruption of mutual intercourse;—and, all neglect in any way, or to any degree, of each other's just claims, must be considered transgressions of this command.

This relation is abused, and the spirit of it lost sight of, when the influence of the one party over the other, is employed as an incentive to sin, as

when “ Jezebel stirred up Ahab to work iniquity ;” when in order to its mutual enjoyment the means of grace are neglected, or the just claims of others on our fellowship and hospitality are slighted ;—in a word, when it is not held altogether subordinate to the glory of God, in the promotion of those objects, about which he requires our talents and our efforts.

2. The parental relation, or that which subsists between children and their parents, is next regulated by this command.

*The duties of parents towards their children* are such as these ;—they are to dedicate their children to God even from the womb. The babes of Israel were to be circumcised on the eighth day ; and Christians should not unnecessarily defer the solemn dedication of their seed to God, in the New Testament ordinance of Baptism. They should engage in it with gratitude and delight, and certainly not with less solemnity and devotion. —Tender care is to be taken of them in infancy. The woman should not forget her sucking child, or fail to have compassion on the son of her womb. Their helplessness should excite pity, and their sufferings demand relief.—Children are to be provided for by their parents. “ If any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.” There may indeed be cases in which the parents *cannot* procure necessary support for their children ; the commandment requires that every possible means be tried in order thereto ; none must think to excuse himself by saying, “ I

cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed.”—As soon as their opening reason renders them capable of receiving instruction, parents are charged with the solemn responsibility of educating their children; that is of training both their minds and bodies in such way as shall most eminently fit them for the station they are destined to occupy. Of this, the communication of Divine knowledge is to form the first and most important part. A holy effort to secure tenderness of conscience, holy impressions, and righteous conduct, must pervade and give the character to the whole process of education. Children must, therefore, be early and first taught to read the word of God, that from their childhood they may, like Timothy, “know the holy Scriptures, which are able to make wise unto salvation,” and to this Divine book they are to be perpetually referred as the standard of all truth, and the rule of all acceptable practice. The truths of revelation must be explained to them as their capacity enlarges to understand them, and the precepts of God commended to their obedience; especially must they be taught their guilty condition in God’s sight, and encouraged and urged to repent of sin, and seek mercy by faith in Christ Jesus. The habit of prayer should very early be fostered. Even before its nature can be understood, it is important to teach the use of a form of words morning and evening, which may afterwards prove a directory in the offering up of their own desires. No pious parents will omit the important duties of family worship; and to these services children must be brought; they

are the best preparation for the worship of the sanctuary. When the requisite habits of stillness have been acquired at the domestic altar, children should be regularly taken to the public services of the sanctuary, where their gracious connexion with the covenant of peace as administered in the Gospel will be shown them, and their hearts by God's blessing be won to its claims. From infancy, children should be taught to revere the sabbath. By the mere disallowing of the toys which please through the week, and the substitution of a book in their place, an impression on behalf of the sabbath may be made even before the tongue can ask the reason of the distinction. "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he shall not depart from it."—Upon this foundation, and under the direction of these prevailing principles, a general education must be given. Habits of cleanliness, and order, of sobriety and good behaviour are to be early fostered in all; for religion is a decided enemy to disorder and intemperance, to rudeness and uncleanness. God is not the author of confusion. In his works there is a place for every thing, and every thing is in its place. When children mocked Elisha, God sent two bears out of the wood to destroy them. The old divines used to say, No cleanliness, no godliness.—General knowledge is to be furnished as opportunity and ability are given, and the sinless accomplishments of a polite education are things which no Christian should despise. Whether they have any thing else to give their children, or no, parents should be

anxious to give them a solidly good and extensive education, and this, to whatever class of society they belong; the children of the poor will be improved by it, and those of the rich may live to need it. All parents have not the ability, and few can command the leisure necessary for the education of their own children; but all should feel that a solemn responsibility rests upon them as to the choice they make, when they transfer the work of education into other hands, and none should ever allow it (if it be possible to avoid it) to pass from under their own supervision and controul. The learned languages, especially those in which the Bible was originally written are amongst the most valuable of accomplishments; the sciences, music, and drawing, amongst the most interesting of recreations.—As they advance in years, children must be trained to habits of industry. Idleness is the mother of all sin, and the most certain preparative for the stroke of the executioner. Education well conducted will lay the foundation of honest industry; for the time soon arrives when education cannot remain an amusement or a plaything. Sons should be brought up to some honest employment, whereby they may be worth their room in the world, and Christians should train up their daughters to do virtuously. Whatever they want, let them not want “Ruth’s portion, a good name, a good head, and good hands.”—Parents are required to correct their children. “Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction shall drive it out.” “He that spareth the rod hateth his son,



but whoso loveth him, chasteneth him betimes." Correction must not be administered in anger, for thus it is written, "Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath;" nor for any thing but sin, for parents also have a Father in heaven, to whom they must give an account.—Parents must pray for their children; before they are born, that the right use of their limbs and their reason may be given them; while they are young, that the efforts of pious education may be blest to their early conversion; every day, and through the whole period of their life. Like Job they should set apart special seasons of prayer for them, and especially as the successive changes of their lives render such seasons important.—A proper example must be set before children. He who sins before his child, sins twice; for he can only expect to see his sin acted over again by his son. Example teaches more impressively than all precept.—Through life, parents must advise their children, with affection and earnestness; assist them, to the extent of their ability, to gain for themselves a standing in society; comfort them under the pressure of difficulties, disappointments, and trials, by the review of their own experience; and at a proper time, and under proper circumstances, should encourage them to settle themselves in marriage, and so give themselves more fully to the welfare of society and the glory of God.—At their death, parents should call their children together, and give them their dying counsel. This will often leave an impression which neither education, advice, nor example could make, and will



always be thankfully received and carefully treasured up by those who truly honour their father and mother.—And let all parents consider it to be their sacred duty to leave their temporal affairs so ordered, that after their decease, they may not be a snare to their children, or a bone of contention amongst them. Reason, justice, religion, alike forbid the monstrous inequality in the distribution of property, which the wills of some parents require; an inequality dictated by arbitrary caprice, or originated by some unlawful passion. Instead of daughters requiring a smaller share than sons, if difference be made at all, their sex demands that it be made in their favour.—No justifiable excuse can be alleged for the neglect of these duties. Thus saith the Lord: “He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children: that the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children; that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments.” And every truly obedient man will respond, “We will not hide them from our children, showing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done.” Ps. lxxviii. 1—8.

*The duties of children towards their parents* must now be declared. Children should love their parents. The supreme attachment of the heart

belongs only to our Father in heaven, but that love which consists in esteem, confidence, and acts of general kindness is due to earthly parents. The want of natural affection is reckoned by the Apostle Paul amongst the most horrid abominations, and except in lands where the Divine law of morals is unknown, is universally execrated amongst men.—Reverence is due from children to their parents. This is the command, “Ye shall fear every man his mother and his father; I am the Lord your God.” By this fear, is meant, a conscientious regard to their lawful authority, and a scrupulous care not to offend them. It includes also an externally respectful behaviour toward them. Children should not treat their parents rudely, nor even familiarly, as if they were their equals or their companions, “a son honoureth his father;” but they ought to speak and act respectfully to them, and especially towards their mother; “her children arise up, and call her blessed.” Solomon when he was king of Israel, “rose up to meet his mother, and bowed himself unto her, and sat down on his throne, and caused a seat to be placed for the king’s mother; and she sat on his right hand.” “The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it.”—Obedience is due to parents. “Children, obey your parents in all things; for this is well pleasing to the Lord.” If, however, their commands should be at variance with those of God, obedience must then be refused, but still with respect and affec-

tion, showing reverence for their authority, and assigning conscientious reasons for noncompliance: "children obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right." When parental authority only crosses the inclination, without touching the conscience, children should feel it to be their duty to yield. Joseph readily obeyed his father, and went to inquire after his brethren, although he knew that they hated him; and Jesus himself became a pattern of filial obedience; for although in the temple about his heavenly Father's work, he went down with Mary and Joseph at their call, and "came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them."—Submission is a further duty of children: to the instructions of their parents; "My son hear the instructions of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother;"—and to their corrections and reproofs; for "folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction shall drive it out." "We have had fathers of our flesh who corrected us, and we gave them reverence."—Tenderness towards the infirmities of parents should always characterize the filial spirit. These, whether natural or moral, should never be made the occasion of jest, or smile, or insult, should never be treated with indifference, or needlessly exposed to others. Remember the curse of Ham, the father of Canaan.—Regard is due to their advice, and especially on the important questions of settlement in the world, and the marriage state. Less than their approval and consent, under ordinary circumstances, will not satisfy a Christian child; and something of parental right to controul must

be understood to be implied in the following passage : “ If any man think that he behaveth himself unseemly toward his virgin daughter, if she pass the flower of her age, and need so require, let him do what he will, he sinneth not ; let them marry. So then he that giveth her in marriage doeth well ; but he that giveth her not in marriage doeth better.”—God requires that children be ready to requite parents when they are in need, and especially in their old age. “ If any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to show piety at home, and to requite their parents ; for that is good and acceptable before God.” The Saviour is himself our pattern in this respect. He provided for his mother when he hung on the cross, commending her to the care of the beloved disciple ; and he exposed the sophistry of the Jews, who affected to devote to the temple service that which ought to have been employed in requiting parental kindness. Matt. xv. 4—6. In fine, children should so live and act, as to be an honour to their parents ; and that they may be so, let them daily pray for them, and bless God on their behalf. “ A wise son maketh a glad father, but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother.”

3. The political relation, or that which subsists in the various walks and circumstances of social and civil life, is placed under the same general regulations.

Mutual claims and obligations exist between *the ruling magistrate and his subjects*. It is required of rulers to be upright and conscientious in the administration of justice ; peaceable in

asserting their own rights, and faithful in maintaining those of others ; sanctioning and supporting that which is good, and discountenancing and depressing that which is evil ; using persuasion rather than force, and exercising clemency, and not cruelty or oppression. “ He that ruleth over men, must be just, ruling in the fear of God.” “ For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil.” The resolutions of David, in the 101st Psalm, are a faithful delineation of magisterial obedience to the fifth commandment. “ I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes ; I hate the work of them that turn aside ; it shall not cleave unto me. A froward heart shall depart from me ; I will not know a wicked person. Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off ; him that hath a high look and a proud heart will not I suffer. Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me ; he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me. He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house ; he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight. I will early destroy all the wicked of the land ; that I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the Lord.” The duties of subjects are specified with equal plainness. They are to cultivate humble and peaceable affections ; submitting “ to the higher powers,” as “ ordained of God ;” supporting them in all legitimate acts of authority, and plans of usefulness ; defending them against the wanton attacks of envious and disorderly men ; contributing cheerfully of their substance to supply the means of government ;

and praying for them that they may be endowed with the spirit of their station, and may rightly regard the claims both of God, the universal ruler, and of men their fellows. Thus saith the Lord: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God, the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever, therefore, resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same; for he is the minister of God to thee for good; but if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain; for he is the minister of God, an avenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues; tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour." "I exhort, therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty; for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour." If the civil ruler should, however, step beyond his province, and attempt to legislate



for conscience, and in things which pertain only unto God, apostolic example has taught us that it is our duty respectfully but firmly to refuse obedience; saying, "We must obey God rather than men;"—and if in hasty anger, or by illegal process, he attempt to oppress or act unjustly, it is again the duty of subjects temperately to remonstrate, as Paul, when they would unjustly have scourged him,—“Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?”

Between *servants and their employers*, mutual duties subsist, and these are to be regulated by the same law. The master is here to receive the parent's honour, and exercise the parent's authority; and the servant is to display the child's ready submission and obedience. "Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed;" obeying "in all things, not with eye-service as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God;" "and they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit." "And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening; knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him."

Similar remarks apply to all the varied relations and circumstances of life. There are mutual duties which *the aged and the young* owe to each other. To the young it is said, "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of

the old man ;” and the aged are to declare God’s “ works to this generation, and his power to every one that is to come.”—The *rich and the poor* owe to each other mutual regard. Thus saith the Lord ; “ charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy ; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.” And to the poor it is said, “ Thou shalt not covet.” “ Be content with such things as ye have.” “ Study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands ; that ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing.”—Men of *superior gifts*, are required to acknowledge the goodness of God in their special distinctions, and improve them for his glory ; to bear with the deficiencies of those who are beneath them, and labour to promote their advancement ; and to use their liberty for edification and not for offence :—whilst *inferiors* are not to judge their superiors, nor envy, nor flatter them ; but glorify God on their behalf, and reverence and esteem his goodness in them. “ We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.” “ For who maketh thee to differ from another ? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive ?”—The *learned* are to teach with kindness and readiness, and the *illiterate*

are to learn with thankfulness and attention. The *healthy* are to watch over and nourish the sick, and the *sick* are to be patient and thankful for the attentions shown them; thus bearing "one another's burdens, and so fulfilling the law of Christ."—The relations of *equals* may also be classed here. They are to regard the dignity and worth of each other; "in honour preferring one another," rejoicing in each other's gifts and advancements as their own, "looking not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." "Let no man seek his own, but every man his neighbour's good to edification."

4. The ecclesiastical relation, or that which subsists between religious parties as such, belongs also to this commandment.

Various precepts of the Mosaic Law unfolded the spirit of obedience in this particular application; but it is plainly unnecessary to dwell on these, the economy being abolished. We confine our illustrations to the New Testament; and advert first of all to the relation between the *ministers of the Gospel and the people of their charge*. Ministers are commanded, "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine." They are to rejoice in the prosperity, and sympathise with the afflictions of their people. They are to go before them, as a shepherd before his flock, showing them the path of life. They are to be gentle among them, "even as a nurse cherisheth her children;"—anxiously solicitous

for their spiritual welfare, "warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that they may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus;" —praying for them and watching for their "souls as those who must give account." They are to rule "the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood;" "not lording it over God's heritage," but faithfully declaring and executing the will of Christ, "without preferring one before another." They are to be "ensamples to the flock," "in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." They are to give attendance to reading, cultivating the gift that is in them, that their profiting may appear to all. They are to treat the aged men as fathers, and the younger as brethren; the elder women as mothers, and the younger as sisters with all purity. And the people of their charge are to "esteem them very highly in love for their works' sake;" to "receive the law at their mouth;" to "obey them who have the rule" over them, and submit themselves; and to deal tenderly with their character and reputation, "not receiving an accusation against them but in the presence of two or three witnesses." They are gratefully to acknowledge their kindness, and liberally provide for their temporal support, on principles of Christian justice, and as an act of obedience to the Divine appointment; not making them rich, but placing them above the painful feelings of anxious care, remembering that they are to give themselves to study, and are to use hospitality.

Christians in their associate or church capacity,

owe various duties to each other, founded on the principle of mutual relationship which this commandment recognises. They should possess a deep interest in each other's welfare, rejoicing with them that rejoice, and weeping with them that weep. They should have a holy concern for each other's consistency,—watching over one another in love, comforting, exhorting, warning, rebuking, restoring, and forgiving one another as circumstances may demand. It is required of them to provoke one another to love and to good works, to be very tender of each other's reputation, to pray constantly *for* and *with* each other, to avoid every thing by which a brother may be offended or made weak, and to treat one another with the confidence of brethren. They are to deal faithfully with each other on the great principles of their common profession, to bear patiently with each other's infirmities in the spirit of Christian charity, and mutually to follow the “things which make for peace, and things where-with one may edify another.” “As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. There should be no schism in the body; but the members should have the same care one for another.”

III. A promise is annexed to this precept, as an inducement to obedience. “*That thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.*”

That this promise did not refer to the Jews only, or to the Old Testament economy alone, is

plain, from the circumstance that it is cited as a motive to obedience in the New Testament:—“Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.” Thus “godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.”

There is a natural connexion recognised here. The success of worldly undertakings, and the happiness of human society, depend on the exercise of right views and feelings on the subject of mutual obligation. God has constituted society upon this principle; and its peace and prosperity are inseparable from the maintenance of due order in its component parts. Life itself is prolonged by comfort, and shortened when rendered miserable. The discharge of duty yields a satisfaction which keeps the mind in peace, whilst the neglect of it promotes disquiet, frets the spirit, mars the health, and wears out life. And there is no relation in which this connexion is more apparent than in that which God has here selected as the specimen and pattern of all the rest. Where parental authority and instruction are sanctified for God; where they are employed to impart Divine knowledge, to restrain depravity, and promote holiness; where their chief aim is to lead to the exercise of repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ; and these efforts are made in the spirit of prayer and dependence on the Divine blessing, a foundation is laid for every thing that is implied in filial obe-



dience. And where the heart is early brought under the influence of filial piety, and taught to fulfil the obligations of social life; this very disposition is itself the germ of peace, as it is the spring of holy consistency in every relation. And so certain is this connexion between social order and personal and relative prosperity, that it would be difficult to find the man who duly regarding the one, does not largely enjoy the other, notwithstanding all the disadvantages of our fallen condition, and the abounding prevalence of the opposite spirit. Nay, so certain is this connexion, that we may challenge the world to find the man who is truly happy or prosperous, and yet lives in disregard of the claims of his fellows.

## THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT.

---

EXODUS xx. 13.

“Thou shalt not kill.”

THERE is but one Being who has life in Himself. He is the source and supporter of it in others, and the Lord of all its efforts. It is his indisputable right to affix to the efforts of every creature their proper character, and He alone has the right in Himself to take away the life He has given. On this Divine right, the sixth commandment proceeds. It is the declared law of God respecting life. The terms in which it is conveyed are absolute, amounting to an universal prohibition. To take life, then, or to do any thing tending to its destruction, is to transgress this command, unless we can show that God has made an exception to the rule; and the precept must be understood to require all that is implied in the preservation and care of life. It must be so expounded as to embody all that revelation teaches on the subject of life.

I. The Brute Creation may be regarded as the first objects of this law.

When viewed as a part of the original law of our nature, this command amounted to an entire prohibition of the life of the creatures. The first man, in his state of innocence, had no right to kill any one of the creatures which God had formed. The produce of the earth was his only food. The creatures were made subject to his authority, to be ruled for God; but in no other sense were they placed within his power, or left at his disposal.

Sin gave occasion for the first modification of the precept in this particular, and God Himself superintended the first death. There is more than probable reason to conclude, that the first animals which were slain, were slain in sacrifice, as typical of the great propitiation of Jesus Christ; and with their skins a covering was provided for the guilty nakedness of our first parents.

Whether it were lawful to take life for any other purpose than that of sacrifice, during the period between the fall and the flood, may fairly be questioned. But it scarcely admits of doubt, that amidst the diversified disobedience and violence of the antediluvians, the creatures were eaten as food; and that they were eaten "in their life," seems almost equally certain. For immediately after the flood, permission was granted to use them as food, with this restriction,—that their lives must first be taken: "Flesh, in the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat." This monstrous practice of cutting off parts of living animals for food, still prevails in unevangelised nations. Bruce's narrative of

this fact, though long questioned, has been amply confirmed by later travellers and modern missionaries.

Under the Jewish economy, the same modification of this law continued; with this difference, that certain kinds of creatures were expressly prohibited to that people.

The Christian dispensation leaves the law as it was given to Noah. It permits us to kill the creatures as we have need of them for food, and it allows the destruction of those which are likely to prove injurious to our comfort.

The precept, "Thou shalt not kill," must be understood to prohibit the malicious destruction of the creatures, when their life is not needed by us, nor injurious to us. In these cases, it is not in our power, and we are not at liberty to indulge a spirit of wanton extermination. It forbids the abuse of the creatures, by which their life is injured. If we employ their strength in our service, that strength is to be supported by a proper supply of food, and a proper degree of rest; and it is not to be stretched beyond its real and comfortable ability. All torturing of animals for purposes of worldly gain or sensual amusement is an injury inflicted on their life, which implies a direct breach of this command. Cock-fighting, bull-baiting, horse-racing, and—(a word to children)—chafer-spinning, are some of the flagrant abuses of the creatures, by which their life is injured.—This command also forbids the infliction of any unnecessary pain upon the creatures, when their life is required to be taken. They must not be needlessly pu-

nished, nor their sufferings needlessly protracted. How far the sufferings inflicted by the common modes of slaughter might be mitigated by the adoption of some easier and less lingering means of death, is a question deserving the serious consideration of the Christian philanthropist. Why, for example, should a calf be bled to death to gratify a pampered appetite? or a bullock *felled* which would die at once by a pistol-shot?

In its spirit, this command requires for the brute creation liberty to live when circumstances do not demand their death; kindness of treatment and care to preserve their lives from all injury, when they are employed by us; and the readiest and easiest mode of death, when their lives must be taken.

II. This commandment must be examined secondly, in its application to our own life; and this in two respects, as to what it forbids, and what it requires.

1. It forbids the taking away of our own life, and whatsoever tendeth thereunto.

Suicide, or self-murder, is one of the most heinous transgressions of the Divine law. No man's life is in his own power; he has therefore no right, under any circumstances, to lay violent hands upon himself. Thus to act is impiously to assume the Divine prerogative, and make himself equal with God; and the various collateral considerations which connect themselves with this assumption greatly aggravate the guilt of the act. Reason pronounces it highly unreasonable; civil laws strike against it; the motives which urge to

it are always vile and debasing ; family reputation is destroyed by it ; society is injured and insulted by it ; and, which is worse than all, it precludes the possibility of repentance, and sends the murderer into an awful eternity ;—" for ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." The plea of lunacy, as implied in all cases of suicide, cannot be sustained. Saul was not mad, but fretted with disappointment, when he fell upon his sword. Ahithophel was not melancholy, but filled with mortified pride, when " he saddled his ass, and arose, and gat him home to his house, to his city, and put his household in order, and hanged himself, and died." Judas was not thrown off his balance by delirium, but was calm and collected, sensible of his sin, and alive to its consequences, when he threw down the pieces of money in the temple, and went out, and destroyed himself.

Many things tend to self-destruction, which do not actually produce it ; and some things effect it by a slow process, instead of a violent act ; all these are forbidden by this commandment. We instance first, affections of the mind. Weariness and dissatisfaction with life pertains to this class of evils. Life is an invaluable blessing. All the circumstances of it are of Divine appointment. If these are painful, is there any just reason for the complaint of " a living man," " a man" who suffers " for the punishment of his sins ?" For a man to say with Job, " My soul chooseth strangling, and death rather than life ;" or with Jonah, " It is better for me to die than to live ;" is not



only vile ingratitude, it is the very spirit of self-destruction, and bears the guilt. "Cease then from anger, and forsake wrath; and fret not thyself in any wise to do evil."—All superstitious and slavish fear of men, and false notions of honour, partake of the same guilt. This led Saul, the King of Israel, to destroy himself, and the Philippian jailor to attempt his life.—Immoderate grief and anxiety have the same tendency. These prey on the spirit, and act like slow poison on the vitals, bringing men to a premature grave.—Indolence generates disease, which destroys life; envy rankles in the bosom, and often drives to madness, which exhausts life; and habitual gloom enervates the system, and wears out life.

Neglect of the proper claims of the body is a more open violation of the law of life. When men deny themselves proper food, sleep, clothing, exercise, recreation, cleanliness, or medicine, there is a neglect of the body, which tendeth to its destruction. In some cases this is mere carelessness, and "by much slothfulness the building decayeth." In other cases, it is excessive covetousness, men having no heart to use the gifts of God. Sometimes it results from inordinate passions, as when Ahab, vexed with disappointment, "laid down on his bed, and turned away his face, and would not eat;" and sometimes from principles of fatalism, as when a man presumptuously rushes into danger. Intemperance, or excessive indulgence, leads to the same result. Gluttony and drunkenness were by the Jewish law punished with stoning. Both make quick work for the

grave, and have sent many thither before they have lived out half their days. Intemperate sexual indulgence is expressly called "the sin against our own body." Immoderate labour is a wasting of strength; it is like a violent wind, that teareth up a tree by the roots. Unnecessary exposure to danger is a presumptuous appeal to Providence, and an affecting trifling with life. Yea, all excess is a species of self-murder, and must meet its doom accordingly. "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. Watch ye, therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man."

But what, in this connexion, shall be said about the claims of the soul? For a man to live without prayer, to neglect the means of Divine knowledge, to spurn the overtures of reconciliation, and harden himself in impenitence and unbelief, is to conspire against the life of his soul, and bring on himself swift destruction, even "everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."—"Thou shalt not kill."

2. The law of life requires all lawful endeavours to preserve our life.

It requires due care of our bodies. "No man," rightly viewing the obligations under which this command places him, "ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it." It requires us to allow ourselves a suitable and compe-

tent supply of meat and drink for the sustenance of life. Thus Timothy is commanded, "Drink no longer water, but use a little wine, for thy stomach's sake, and thine often infirmities;"—to provide necessary clothing for the comfort and defence of our bodies, this God taught us to do by his provision for our first parents :—to refresh our bodies by a proper measure of rest and sleep ; "it is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows ; for so he giveth his beloved sleep :"—to use moderate labour, exercise, and recreations ; "Even when we were with you," (said Paul) "this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat." And Solomon suggests this motive to labour, "He that laboureth, laboureth for himself, for his mouth craveth it of him." "There is a time to laugh," as well as "a time to weep :"—to practise cleanliness ; the injunctions to it are numerous in the Levitical law, and the moral allusions to it in the Scriptures prove its claims as a means of health :—to employ proper medicines for the restoration of health and the prolongation of life ; even as Isaiah commanded in the case of Hezekiah, "Let them take a lump of figs, and lay it for a plaister on the boil, and he shall recover :"—and to avoid needless exposure to pestilential infection, using such precautions as are possible, when duty calls into danger.

The due regulation of our appetites and passions is also required by this law. The connexion between the soul and the body is most close and intimate ; and the subjection of all inordinate and

evil appetites and passions, and their reduction into regular order, is essential to the true enjoyment of life, and contributes to its continuance and vigour. Patience, quietness, and cheerfulness of mind, are duties implied in this precept : “ A merry heart doeth good like a medicine, but a broken spirit drieth the bones.”

Supreme attention to the spiritual part of our nature, and diligent preparation for immortal life, is the highest requisition of this commandment. The terms of life proposed by the Gospel demand immediate and cordial reception ; “ Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish ;” “ He that believeth not the Son, shall not see life.”—All sin is to be avoided, it is the death of the soul. “ As righteousness tendeth to life, so he that pursueth evil, pursueth it to his own death.” “ He that sinneth against ME, wrongeth his own soul ; all they that hate me love death.”—Worldly interests and pursuits, however lawful in themselves, must be subordinated to the interests of the soul, and the pursuit of its salvation. “ What is a man profited, although he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul ?”—All the various means of grace are to be diligently employed. By these, spiritual life is promoted and maintained. “ Pray without ceasing.” “ In every thing give thanks.” “ Search the Scriptures.” “ Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.”

A question arises here as to what is the law of life, when placed in circumstances of danger from human violence. That all lawful means are to be employed to preserve life is sufficiently plain ; the

question is, What are lawful means? Every thing which remonstrance and firm moral resistance can do, to ward off the blow of the murderer, or prevent the infliction of an unjust sentence, is to be done. Paul pleaded his rights as a Roman citizen, when he was illegally bound, and in danger of being scourged. But the spirit of the New Testament forbids to use violent means of defence. "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head." In case of persecution for conscience' sake, Christ has commanded his disciples not to fight, but flee; "If they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another." When this is impossible, he has commanded them to submit: "Whosoever will save his life, shall lose it; but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall find it." If we cannot save our life without sinning, Christ has said, "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

III. The import of this command is to be further sought, in its reference to the life of our neighbour.

1. The duties required are two; to preserve, by all lawful means, the bodily life, and to endeavour, by all proper means, to save the soul of our neighbour.

As to his bodily life. The innocent is to be

protected and defended against injustice. Thus the people of Israel pleaded for the life of Jonathan, when Saul would have put him to death; "Shall Jonathan die, who hath wrought this great salvation in Israel? God forbid: as the Lord liveth, there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground, for he hath wrought with God this day." Thus the Jewish law commands; "Open thy mouth for the dumb, in the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction. Open thy mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy." Nor must any man say with Cain, "Am I my brother's keeper?" For it is written again, "If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; if thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it; and shall not he render to every man according to his works?"—This law requires us to shelter the persecuted, to warn them of danger, and not to deliver them up unto death. It is spoken to the commendation of Obadiah, that "when Jezebel slew the prophets of the Lord, *he* hid them by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water;" and the conduct of Paul's sister's son is recorded with marked approbation, in warning him against the plot of the Jews to obtain his life.—The life of the needy is to be preserved, by giving him the necessaries of life. "If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding—



ing, ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?"—All this implies, the maintenance of such affections towards our neighbour, as will keep us back from injuring him. "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all malice; and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."—With this is connected the exercise of a peaceable, mild, and courteous disposition, in looks, speech, and behaviour. "Follow after the things which make for peace." "Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye." "A soft answer turneth away wrath; but grievous words stir up anger."—Lastly, as to injuries; occasions of strife are to be avoided. Abraham's example is deserving of universal imitation; "Let there be no strife," said he to Lot, "between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me; if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left." All things are to be taken in the best sense; "Charity is not easily provoked; thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth

all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things :”—and even to our enemies, kindness is to be shown, and vengeance left unto God. “ Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use and persecute you ; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven ; for he maketh his sun to shine on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.”

A still higher duty is enjoined by this command, to seek the salvation of the soul of our neighbour ; and every thing is required which can be done to commend religion to his embrace, and induce his compliance with the will of God. The Holy Scriptures are to be placed in his hands “ according to the commandment of God our Saviour.” He is to be persuaded to “ be reconciled to God.” “ Thou shalt not suffer sin upon thy neighbour.” The value of his soul is to be shown him ; the necessity of “ repentance towards God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ,” must be declared to him ; and holy urgency employed with him to induce him to “ flee from the wrath to come.” No obligation is stronger or more clearly pointed out in the word of God than this, and it is binding on “ all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.” The only qualification requisite to its discharge is that which holy character supplies ; and every man has more or less opportunity for such efforts. Parents are bound to seek the salvation of their children ; masters that of their servants, and every man that of his neighbour

and friend. Bodily life is of little value when put in contrast with the life of the soul, and the zeal to promote the latter should be proportionably vigorous and active. Every principle of benevolence implies such zeal, and urges to it. And never will the world be converted unto the faith of Christ, until every Christian man sets himself thus to seek the life of his neighbour. O! with what emotions will this precept fill the minds of many when the light of eternity discloses its unutterable importance! “Thou shalt not kill.”

2. This command forbids the taking away of our neighbour's life, with every thing that tendeth to its destruction, and whatever endangers the interests of his immortal life.

Murder is a crime so decidedly hostile to all principles both human and divine, so horrible and atrocious, presenting so direct an invasion of the Divine prerogative, and so open an outrage on the order and security of his government, that God has not only denounced it in his word, and required it to be punished with death in human governments, but by his special providence he watches to unravel its mysteries, to detect its secrets, to bring its facts to light, and expose the murderer to his doom.—The correct interpretation of this precept leads us to regard as murder all unjust destruction of our neighbour's life. This has sometimes taken place under colour of law, when no real crime has been proved, or at least, none deserving of death. The conspiracy instigated by Ahab and Jezebel against Naboth, was a crime of this species; blasphemy indeed was

sentenced to death by the Jewish law, but the charge was false. The martyrdom of the saints has often taken place under a like pretext, but it is always murder. And by what other name shall we call the infliction of death on offenders against the mere peace or property of human society? Will any one attempt to prove that God has given to men the right thus to dispose of life at their pleasure?—War is wholesale murder, to satisfy the unhallowed ambition of princes, or redress the imaginary wrongs of nations. If it be evil for one man to avenge himself at the expense of his neighbour's life, on the same principle it is wrong for nations to do so. God is the Lord of life, and when *his* authority can be shown, as in the case of the invasion of Canaan by the Jews, the lawfulness of war might be admitted, but not under any other circumstances.—Duelling is also murder. It is the effect of pride and rage; an assumption of God's right over life, and an invasion of his right of vengeance. If neither party be slain, it is equally guilty; God looks at the heart.—Similar remarks apply to the more brutal and degrading practice of prize-fighting. It is an outrage on all the sympathies of our nature, and all the decencies of society; but it is more, it is a direct and deliberate perpetration of murder, and involves in the same guilt all aiders and abettors of the practice.

Many things tend to the injury of our neighbour's life, which do not actually destroy it; these are also forbidden in this command. A man may be a murderer in his heart; "out of the heart

proceedeth murder.” Sinful anger is thus guilty ; “whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment ;”—Hatred ; “whoso hateth his brother is a murderer :”—Envy ; “the chief priests delivered Christ for envy ;”—Desire of revenge ; of Simeon and Levi it is said, “Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce, and their wrath, for it was cruel ;”—Contriving or consenting to the unjust death of others ; the former was the guilt of the forty men who “bound themselves with an oath that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul,” and the latter was the guilt of Paul himself in the case of Stephen, “When the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him ;”—and here may also be added, principles of Infidelity ; these destroy in the heart the influence of God’s supremacy, and deny the certainty of an eternity to come, thus rendering life cheap, the ready prey of every blood-thirsty and cruel man. Of this, the scenes of the French Revolution furnish ample proof.

Again, a man may be a murderer in words ; by applying opprobrious epithets ; “whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council ; but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire :”—by cursing and imprecating evil, as the youths mocked Elisha, saying, “Go up, thou bald head ;” as Shimei cursed David, saying, “Come out, come out, thou bloody man, thou man of Belial :”—by swearing

to kill our neighbour, as the Jews did Paul;—by propagating licentious doctrines in religion; “their word will eat as doth a canker.”

There are also murderous acts, which do not issue in the actual loss of life. Such are prize-fights, when death does not follow, quarrelsome fights, which though seldom fatal, are often injurious, and all angry blows, which are always sinful and often highly prejudicial to health.—Oppression is a species of murder, whether it consist in extortion, or in withholding proper means of subsistence, or in bestowing inadequate remuneration to labour, or in detaining the person in cruel bondage; in all these cases it operates against the life of the oppressed.—The withholding from the necessitous that which we could fairly afford to give for their relief;—the exposure of the innocent in posts of danger, as Uriah by David;—and the non-execution of the law against murderers, if at least, they are thereby permitted to be at liberty and shed more blood, are each of them transgressions of this command, which forbids all offences against the life and well-being of men.

There remains to be added to this enumeration all those things which endanger the interests of our neighbour's soul. Men may be guilty of murdering the souls of others, by giving them an example to sin; “It must needs be that offences come, but woe to that man by whom they come;” by counselling others to sin, as Jonadab did Ammon;—by joining with others in sin, and so becoming “partakers of their evil deeds;”—by



provoking others to sin, as Jezebel stirred up Ahab ; —by soliciting and tempting others to sin, saying, “ Cast in thy lot among us, let us all have one purse ; ” —by teaching that which is sinful ; “ Woe to them that call evil good, and good evil, that put darkness for light and light for darkness, that put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter ; ” —yea, by neglecting what we owe to our neighbour for his salvation, whether it be provision of the means of grace, or prayer to God for the life of his soul.

Who is not condemned by this precept also ? “ Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation.”

## THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT.

---

EXODUS XX. 14.

“Thou shalt not commit adultery.”

THIS command assumes the spotless purity of the Divine nature; it enjoins personal and relative purity, and forbids the immodesty which is opposed thereto. The obedience required is summed up in this word, “Keep thyself pure.”

I. The purity required is the first object of attention.

Man at his creation is the model of it; Christ in his humiliation on earth the perfect exemplification of it. It is founded on a right state of heart towards God,—a due sense of subordination to his authority. Where the claims of God are not supremely regarded, those of the creatures are sure to be falsely contemplated; they will either be overlooked and despised, or over-rated and put in the place of those of God. That creature who feels not his entire and absolute dependence on the Creator, and who does not act under this impression, is totally depraved. To feel that we are His right, His property, and that we are

bound to submit to His authority in all the relations in which we may be placed, is the first principle of that purity by which we should be distinguished. The supreme love of God which is implied in this subordination, is the essence of a truly benevolent disposition. It includes an attachment to all that which he loves, proportioned to the degree of its resemblance to Him, and a corresponding aversion to every thing which is unlike Him, and which he hates. This Divine conformity naturally begets a due regard to the established order or purity of the creation. It accounts all things right as God made them, and no otherwise. Every being was pure in the condition in which it was created; and it is pure only in so far as it remains in that state and fulfils the law of its nature and relations, avoiding alike deficiency and excess. The seventh command requires the maintenance of this purity between the sexes. No man must attach undue importance to himself, or seek undue gratification for himself, but remember that the woman has claims as well as he, and that these are equally sacred. No man in his relation towards others, must pervert his powers of body or mind from their original and appointed use and order, and no man must seek so to pervert others. This purity has its seat in the heart. It is light in the understanding, the light of truth;—it is right views of the established claims of the creatures of God in their mutual relations. It is submission in the will;—submission to the authority of God concerning the relations between the creatures.

It is order in the affections;—the conformity of the attachments and aversions to the law of God. It is tenderness in the conscience;—discovering itself in a ready sense of right and wrong, and a holy solicitude to avoid “even the appearance of evil.” It is subordination in the passions;—subordination to the dictates of reason, and the arrangements of God. It is the consecration of the memory—to retain the thoughts of the Divine presence and laws. It is the spirituality of the desires;—directing them supremely to God, and seeking inferior gratification only as it is permitted by Him. It is the sanctity of the imagination;—revolting at uncleanness and delighting only in that which is holy.

The expressions of this purity which are more immediately required by this law, are these:—

1. Government of the senses.

Purity is the turning away of the eyes and ears from all guilty solicitations. Thus Job said, “I have made a covenant with mine eyes.” David prays, “Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity.” And “thus saith the Lord,” “Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee;” and again, “Rise up, ye women that are at ease; hear *my* voice, ye careless daughters.”

2. Modesty of dress.

Solomon speaks of the attire of a harlot to condemn it; and Paul commands that “Women adorn themselves with modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broidered hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but, which

becometh women professing godliness, with good works."

3. Temperance in food.

They that would keep themselves pure, must keep their bodies in subjection. Paul reasoned of temperance, as well as of righteousness and judgment, when he preached before the adulterous Felix and Drusilla; and thus our Lord exhorts, "Take heed lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness." Fasting and prayer may be understood to be enjoined by this precept.

4. Sobriety of speech.

Thus it is written; "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt;"—and again, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers." "But fornication, and all uncleanness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient, but rather giving of thanks."

5. Association with proper company.

For a holy man to choose as associates and friends persons who are destitute of vital godliness, and therefore sure to prove a snare to him, is an anomaly which it is not easy to explain, a deviation from purity which nothing can justify.

Prudent appearances of association, where the company itself may be desirable, are equally implied in this purity. We must not so act as to lead others to suppose that our purity is questionable,

or our intention in any degree different from the reality.

The importance of avoiding evil company is thus impressively declared by Solomon:—"My son, attend unto my wisdom, and bow thine ear to my understanding: that thou mayest regard discretion, and that thy lips may keep knowledge. For the lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb, and her mouth is smother than oil: but her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps take hold on hell. Lest thou shouldest ponder the path of life, her ways are moveable, that thou canst not know them. Hear me now, therefore, O ye children, and depart not from the words of my mouth. Remove thy way far from her, and come not nigh the door of her house: lest thou give thine honour unto others, and thy years unto the cruel: lest strangers be filled with thy wealth; and thy labours be in the house of a stranger: and thou mourn at the last, when thy flesh and thy body are consumed, and say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof; and have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me. I was almost in all evil in the midst of the congregation and assembly."

#### 6. Lawful marriage.

Marriage is a Divine institution. God appointed it at the beginning as the natural state of man; and still, "Marriage is honourable in all." It is a union between two persons of different



sexes, and two only; in order to their mutual comfort and happiness, and the propagation of their species. It is the most intimate union of which our nature is capable; and when formed, it is designed to be permanent till death. Thus when "the Pharisees came to Jesus, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause, he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read that he who made them at the beginning, made them male and female, and said; For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they two shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more two, but one flesh. What, therefore, God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

Marriage must take place between parties capable of answering the ends of marriage; at a proper period of life; under those legal circumstances which are considered to furnish the bond of social order, within the prescribed degrees of affinity; and in the case of pious persons, only where the evidence of piety is satisfactory at the time of making the contract;—"She is at liberty to be married to whom she will, but only in the Lord."

7. The due discharge of all the duties of the married state.

Without this, marriage will be no fence to purity. Thus saith the Lord; "Drink waters out of thine own cistern, and running waters out of thine own well. Let thy fountain be blessed, and rejoice with the wife of thy youth. Let her

be as the loving hind and pleasant roe ; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times, and be thou ravished always with her love.”—“ Ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers be not hindered.” “ I will, therefore, that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully :”—that they “ be sober, love their husbands, love their children, be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.”

Of the purity which we have now delineated, our Lord Jesus Christ was a perfect pattern. He was “ holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners.” His very enemies could find fault with nothing but his doctrine, his practice was blameless. His senses were always aids to the principles of purity. His dress was a vesture which covered his whole person. His food was plain and simple, and eaten only when it was necessary ; and he drank of the brook by the way. His conversation was strictly holy. His associates were holy men, save when he mingled with sinners to do them good. He did not marry, but he had the gift of continency, and enjoined marriage on those who have not.

II. Our second object is to expose the immodesty which is forbidden.

1. It is unnecessary to do more than name the direct acts of sin which transgress this command ;

for none attempt to justify them, however numerous they may be who are guilty of them.

Unnatural indulgences are first forbidden : Sodomy ; Bestiality ; Incest, which takes place between parties within the forbidden degrees of relationship.—Open intercourse between the sexes ; God made one man and one woman ; “ and wherefore one ? That he might seek a godly seed.”—Adultery, which takes place where one or both the parties are married ; along with which may be reckoned, Bigamy, Polygamy, and Concubinage.—Fornication, or the illicit intercourse of single persons, and along with it Seduction ; the whole system of Prostitution ; and Rape, whether resulting from physical force, or deceptive representation. To these must be added the secret uncleanness of a person alone ; and all immoderate and unseasonable use even of the marriage bed ; “ Let every one of you,” says Paul, ‘ know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour.’ Unnecessary abstinence *from* marriage where the gift of continency is not enjoyed, and *in* marriage “ except with consent for a time” in order to fasting and prayer, are also breaches of this command.

2. There are other direct breaches of this command, which do not amount to the outward act.

Sins of the heart, forbidden by it. Christ speaks of “ committing adultery in the heart.” All speculative filthiness ; unclean imaginations, thoughts, purposes, and affections, even though they are not intended to be pursued into the gross act, are here forbidden. Such a heart re-

minds one of the description of Babylon; "the habitation of devils, the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird."

Sins of the lips, forbidden by it. Such are all filthy communications and obscene allusions, however disguised in the slang of the initiated, or whispered in the ear of confidential secrecy.

Sins of the life, which do not amount to positive acts of adultery, also forbidden by it. Such are Wanton Looks. There are "eyes full of adultery;" David fell by his eyes; and Christ says, "Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."—Impudent behaviour, indelicate postures, and immodest gestures, contrary to religion and good manners, belong to this place. Isaiah denounces "the daughters of Zion who are haughty, and walk with stretched forth necks, and wanton eyes; walking and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet."—And, all foolish and playful embraces and dalliance between unmarried persons, are sins of this class. They are like the smoke which precedes the flame.

3. There are various Excitements to Sin; circumstances which tend to corrupt our own or our neighbour's chastity; and these are equally guilty and forbidden. We mention the following:

Immodest Apparel. God appointed raiment for necessity, to cover our guilty nakedness, to distinguish sexes, and callings; the devil has found out a fourth use of it, as an incitement to lust. The dress, or rather, state of undress in

which some females choose to appear, and the close dress which men sometimes assume, are as insulting to chaste society, as they are abominable before God. If they should have no ill intention, it tends to defile the minds of others.

Evil Company. It was Joseph's commendation that he fled from his mistress.

Idleness, and vain gadding about, exposes to many temptations. This was the iniquity of Israel, "Pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness in her, and her daughters."

Intemperance, Gluttony, and Drunkenness. As these tend to murder, they are forbidden by the sixth commandment; as they tend to adultery, they are forbidden by the seventh. "Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last, it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things." Mark also the language of Jeremiah: "They were as fed horses in the morning; every one neighed after his neighbour's wife."

Promiscuous Dancing. This entertainment is offensive to the grave and pious, as it savours of a worldly spirit, and offensive to God, as it is evidently an incentive to lust. It has proved the gate of temptation to thousands, who have indulged in this "chambering and wantonness" till it has proved their ruin. It can in no case bear serious reflection.

Effeminate Music and Lewd Songs, are closely connected with the preceding departure from

propriety, and are equally dangerous. Their influence is thus described by Israel: "Take an harp, go about the city, thou harlot that hast been forgotten; make sweet melody, sing many songs, that thou mayest be remembered."

Theatrical Performances. The language they employ; the scenical representations they exhibit, and the actual indecencies which they often include, violate the spirit of this command, and become a snare to multitudes.

Lascivious Pictures and Books, must also be condemned on the same grounds. They pollute the senses, and defile the mind. The promiscuous reading of the ancient Classics, by youths at school, is on this ground highly objectionable.

Undue delay of marriage; unjust divorce; wilful desertion, and all want of proper affection, kindness, and confidence between married parties, are also to be avoided as incitements to evil. On the same principles must be condemned the Popish doctrine and practice of forbidding lawful marriages, of dispensing with unlawful ones, and of shutting up men and women in monasteries on pretence of greater piety.

III. This sin has special aggravations. These are pointed out in the word of God.

1. As a sin against God; it is a most direct insult of that holiness which he declares to be his glory, that he will not give to another; and it is a vile disparagement of his authority, in a case where obedience is most easy.

2. As a sin against the perpetrator of it; it dishonours and debases his own body; "Every



sin that a man doeth is without the body, but he that committeth fornication, sinneth against his own body.”—It leaves an indelible stain on his reputation; “Whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding; he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul. A wound and dishonour shall he get; and his reproach shall not be wiped away.”—Poverty and want follow in its train; “By means of a whorish woman a man is brought to a piece of bread; and the adulteress will hunt for the precious life.”—It stupifies the conscience; “Whoredom, and wine, and new wine take away the heart.”—It is very seldom repented of; “None that go unto her return again, neither take they hold of the paths of life.” “I find more bitter than death the woman whose heart is snares and nets, and her hands as bonds; whoso pleaseth God shall escape from her; but the sinner shall be taken by her. Behold, this have I found, saith the preacher, counting one by one, to find out the account; which yet my soul seeketh, but I find not; one man among a thousand have I found; but a woman among all these have I not found.”—It leads to premature death; “Her house inclineth unto death, and her paths unto the dead.” “She hath cast down many wounded; yea, many strong men have been slain by her. Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death.”—It is ruinous to the soul: “Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.” “Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,” “nor any

unclean person, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God."

3. As a sin against society;—This man perisheth not alone in his iniquity. One sinner here, destroyeth much good. This sin disrupts the bonds of social obligation, injures the peace of the community, and prevents the spread of the truth and the increase of holy principles.

4. In its aspect on the future state of existence it is peculiarly heinous. It can entail gratification in the present world only, and this is but for a moment; whilst it lays the foundation of eternal disappointment and misery. The passions rage without objects in Hell, and prey for ever on the souls and bodies of their victims without relief.

Whilst shame and confusion of face must cover every man who beholds himself in this glass, how earnestly should we adopt David's prayer; "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity." "Create in me a clean heart, O God."

## THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT.

---

Exodus xx. 15.

“Thou shalt not steal.”

THE perfect rectitude or justice of God, is the foundation of this precept. Justice is an equal regard to our own rights and those of others. It belongs to God in perfection, and characterizes all his dealings with his creatures. It is his prerogative to direct and maintain the rights of the universe, and he says, “Thou shalt not steal.” This is the law concerning property; it assumes certain facts which must be first contemplated; it enjoins honesty, and forbids dishonesty.

I. The facts which it assumes. These are three :—

1. The distinction of property.

If every man had not his own portion, but there should be an universal community of goods, and an equality of circumstances, this command could have no place. It is supposed in it, that “what is mine, is mine; and what is thine, is thine,” however great may be the disparity in the share of this world’s good, which has fallen to our separate lot; and hence it is commanded to each of us, “Thou shalt not steal;”—thou shalt not take from thy neighbour, by unjust means,

any part of his worldly portion, nor unjustly dispose of any part of thine own.

2. The divine origin of this distinction.

God has displayed his Supremacy in the differences which obtain amongst his creatures. "Of the same lump, he has made one vessel to honour, and another to dishonour;" and he has distributed the gifts of his bounty to every man severally as he will, giving no account of any of his matters, but requiring of every man to fulfil the obligations of his own circumstances and relations. The command supposes further,

3. The mutual obligations of men towards each other arising out of this distinction.

What these obligations are, it is our business now to inquire. The command implies that every man is bound to cherish certain convictions as to his own and his neighbour's estate, and to act consistently on those convictions. We proceed then to describe,

II. The honesty which this injunction requires. This may be viewed—

1. As it exists in, and terminates on ourselves. It includes—

(1.) A proper sense of the Divine Providence. The habitual sense of dependence is the first proper feeling of a creature towards the Creator; and this is the radical feature of an honest principle. Hence Israel is cautioned against saying in their heart, "My power, and the might of my hand, hath gotten me this wealth. But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God, for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth;"—The

Psalmist teaches, "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it;"—and Christ has taught us to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread."

(2.) Contentment with the arrangements of Providence is the natural effect of a proper sense of our dependence. If we are sensible that we deserve nothing, that all we enjoy we receive from the hand of benevolence, and that for the success of every effort we are entirely dependent on the superintending and over-ruling government of God, we shall proportionately feel a holy satisfaction in that portion of good which he allots to us; in other words, we shall be prepared to obey the injunction before us. Hence we are commanded to "be content with such things as we have;" and directions are given us for our conduct in all the stations and circumstances in which we can possibly be found. That man is in the direct way to act unjustly towards his neighbour or himself, who aspires to a station for which he is not qualified, and is envious at the better estate of others. Honesty requires,

(3.) A lawful calling and employment. Man was not formed for indolence, but for activity and proper service. Adam in his innocent state was required "to dress the garden and keep it." All the holy men who are commended to our imitation in the Scriptures, had some calling or employment, though many of them were born to great wealth and large estates. The Redeemer, who is our great exemplar, wrought with his own hands at his father's trade for many years; and

the New Testament commands us to "labour, working with our hands the thing that is good." Observe:—It is to be "that which is good." We must have a lawful calling; for there are some callings which proceed on principles that the Bible does not justify, and which imply practices that it expressly condemns.—Honesty next implies,

(4.) Diligence in our situation. "The hand of the diligent maketh rich." Proper diligence in our calling greatly depends on our skill in it. "The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way," and God encourages us to expect his assistance for this end. "Give ye ear, and hear my voice; hearken, and hear my speech. Doth the plowman plow all day to sow? doth he open and break the clods of his ground? When he hath made plain the face thereof, doth he not cast abroad the fitches, and scatter the cummin, and cast in the principal wheat, and the appointed barley and the rye in their place? For his God doth instruct him to discretion; and doth teach him. For the fitches are not threshed with a threshing instrument, neither is a cart-wheel turned about upon the cummin; but the fitches are beaten out with a staff and the cummin with a rod. Bread corn is bruised; because he will not ever be threshing it, nor break it with the wheel of his cart, nor bruise it with his horsemen. This also cometh forth from the Lord of hosts, who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working."

(5.) Prudence belongs to honesty. A single



imprudent step often destroys the fruit of many years' labour, and lays the basis of dishonesty and every evil work. "A good man will guide his affairs with discretion." Prudent honesty forbids us to embark in concerns and pursuits, to which our talents are not adapted, and for which our means are not equal. Even in preaching the Gospel, the Apostle lays down this rule, "not stretching ourselves beyond our measure."—Prudence will avoid unnecessary pleas and law-suits to establish or recover our rights. These are seldom entered into from merely honest principles, and the law of Christianity teaches that the case is an extreme one in which it is right to have recourse to them. "Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life? If, then, ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church. I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren? But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. Now, therefore, there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?"—Prudence will also avoid rash suretyships. "Be

not thou of them that are sureties for debts; if thou hast nothing to pay, why should he take thy bed from under thee?"—To honesty also belongs,

(6.) The due appropriation of the fruit of our endeavours. And here, that sense of the Divine Providence on which all true honesty is built, teaches that God and his cause have the first claim on the fruit of our efforts. "Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase." Under the Jewish law, a certain proportion of every man's income, even as much as two-tenths, and every third year three-tenths, was absolutely required to be given to the support of religion, before he made any other appropriation of his property; and the prophet Malachi expressly teaches us, that many of the evils which Israel endured, originated in their neglect to bring the tithes and offerings into the house of God. And besides the amount thus prescriptively demanded, every honest, pious Israelite made voluntary offerings at the altar of his God. Christianity retains the principle, without prescribing the proportion, and makes its appeal to the vastly increased obligations of its free and spiritual economy. It is both dishonest and dangerous to withhold from Christ, that on which in the persons of his ministers and his poor members, He has an undoubted claim. This is the *first* claim on our property, and God will deal with us in the matter as we deal with Him. "There is that scattereth and yet increaseth; there is that withholdeth more than is meet, and it tendeth to poverty."—The next claim is by Self. Honesty

requires the frugal but not niggardly, the suitable but not extravagant enjoyment of the fruit of our labour. Solomon says, "He that laboureth, laboureth for himself," and Christ commands, "Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost."—A third claim is put in by our Children. "The children should not lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children." "If any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." This claim extends to food, raiment, education, and trade or employment.—The next claim is by our remoter Relatives if they need our aid. "If any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents; for that is good and acceptable before God."—And lastly, mankind in general. "Provide things honest in the sight of all men." "As ye have therefore opportunity, do good unto all men."

Property is simply a trust; and it is no further a blessing, than it is honestly employed according to the will of God.

2. Honesty is to be viewed as it is exercised towards our neighbour.

The rule of interpretation in all cases where our neighbour is concerned is this; "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them; for this is the law and the prophets." This includes

(1.) Satisfaction of his just claims on us. "Thus saith the Lord;" "Render therefore to all their dues; tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to

whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour." Justice towards our neighbour's claims on us, should be full, satisfying those claims; faithful, realizing all the circumstances of our engagements; and, punctual, regarding the time of our appointments and obligations. Incapacity to satisfy the just claims of our neighbour, is always our sin, except when it is the result of providential circumstances over which we had no controul, or at least not such controul as was available to suspend their operation. In all such cases, the incapacity must be duly acknowledged, and all the satisfaction offered which can be given. Legal honesty requires no more than this; but Christian honesty further demands, that if at any future period, Providence should furnish us with the means of making up the deficiency, it be honourably and promptly supplied.

(2.) Integrity in our transactions. It has been well remarked, "We should deal with God, as if the eyes of men were upon us; and with men, as knowing that the eyes of God are upon us." A strict regard to truth, faithfulness, and righteousness, whether it be in bargains of buying and selling, or in matters of trust which are lodged with us; and the most open and unequivocal simplicity and plainness, are essential to integrity. "Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not." "The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,

teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world."

(3.) Restitution. This has to do with things found, which are to be restored to their owners, and not concealed or kept. "Thou shalt not see thy brother's ox or his sheep go astray, and hide thyself from them; thou shalt in any case bring them again unto thy brother. And if thy brother be not nigh unto thee, or if thou know him not, then thou shalt bring it unto thine own house, and it shall be with thee, until thy brother seek after it, and thou shalt restore it to him again. In like manner shalt thou do with his ass; and so shalt thou do with his raiment; and with all lost things of thy brother's, which he hath lost, and thou hast found, shalt thou do likewise; thou mayest not hide thyself."—It relates also to Injuries, which are to be repaired to the full amount. The prophet Ezekiel mentions this as one of the signs of true repentance; "If the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed," &c., "he shall surely live; he shall not die;" and Zaccheus thus evidenced the genuineness of his repentance, "If I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him four-fold."

(4.) Prevention of evil. If we do not prevent the evil, which we see coming upon our neighbour, when it is in our power to do so, it is the same thing as if we actually procured it to him. "Thou shalt not see thy brother's ass or ox fall down by the way, and hide thyself from them; thou shalt surely help him to lift them up again."

(5.) Charity to our neighbour's necessities. Our abundance should be a supply for his want, and his abundance a supply for our want, that there may be equality. Lending is often pronounced inexpedient; and when honest principle does not exist in the borrower, may not be required; but the command of Christ is this; "From him that would borrow of thee, turn not thou away." "Do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great."—To be able to "*give*" is the end at which honest labour is directed to aim; "Let him that stole steal no more; but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth."

III. Our next object is to expose the Dishonesty which the command forbids.—This includes;—

1. Common theft.

By this is meant the seizing of our neighbour's property against his will, or without his knowledge, and applying it to our own use, or otherwise disposing of it, without his consent. The thing taken may be very small, but "he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much." It will not do to say that we intended to pay it back at another time; the appropriation is the theft:—or, that it is of no value; the question is, was it our own? If not, however valueless to our neighbour, or apparently desirable to ourselves, we have no right to dispose of it.

2. The reception of stolen goods.

"Whoso is partaker with a thief, hateth his own soul." Amongst the crimes which God threatens



to reprove, and set in order before the eyes of their perpetrators, is this, "When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him."

3. Fraudulent dealing.

"This is the will of God," "that no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter; because that the Lord is the avenger of all such." To this species of dishonesty pertain False Weights and Measures. "A false balance is an abomination to the Lord, but a just weight is his delight;" and again, it is written, "Divers weights and divers measures are alike abomination to the Lord."—The removal of Land-marks. Solomon commands, "Remove not the old land-marks; and enter not into the fields of the fatherless; for their Redeemer is mighty; he shall plead their cause with thee."—Unjust inclosures and depopulations. "Woe to them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth;" and the condemnation of some is thus pronounced, "They covet fields, and take them by violence; and houses, and take them away."—Unfaithfulness in Contracts. He obtaineth acceptance with God, who "swareth to his own hurt, and changeth not."—Unfaithfulness in Trusts. "If ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?"—Exorbitant Charges. "He that getteth riches, and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at the end shall be a fool."—Bribery. For thus it is written in the book of Job, "The congregation of hypocrites shall be desolate, and

fire shall consume the tabernacles of bribery.”—Unnecessary detention of that which belongs to others. “Withhold not good from him to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it. Say not, Go, and come again, and to-morrow I will give, when thou hast it by thee.” The withholding of wages is thus condemned: “Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth; and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.”—Contracting Debts which we have it not in our power to pay. “Provide things honest in the sight of all men.” “Owe no man anything, but to love one another.”—All misrepresentation to enrich ourselves; such as ascribing false qualities to the articles we have to dispose of, and recommending them beyond their real value, is fraudulent dealing. “The getting of treasures by a lying tongue, is a vanity tossed to and fro of them that seek death.” The principle is the same, when the truth is concealed, though no misrepresentation be actually employed.—To these must be added, the depreciation of that which we purchase, in order to cheapen the price. “It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer; but when he goeth his way, he boasteth himself.”

#### 4. Oppression.

Such is slavery. “If thy brother be waxen poor and be sold unto thee, thou shalt not compel him to serve as a bond-servant.”—Rigorous Service. “Thou shalt not rule over thy servant with rigour, but shalt fear God.”—Extortion. “Woe

unto you Scribes, and Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye make clean the outside of the cup and platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess.”—Iniquitous Usury. “He that by usury and unjust gain increaseth his substance, shall gather it for him that will pity the poor.”—Vexatious Law-suits. “Devise not evil against thy neighbour, seeing he dwelleth securely by thee.”—Monopolies, and especially of Corn. “He that withholdeth corn, the people shall curse him; but blessing shall be upon the head of him that selleth it.”

#### 5. Man-stealing.

“Men-stealers” are classed by Paul with the ungodly for whom “the law is made;” and “slaves” are enumerated among the articles of guilty merchandise for which the mystical Babylon is doomed to destruction. All aiders and abettors of the crime are of course involved in the guilt, and the adage is especially true here, “The receiver is worse than the thief.”

#### 6. Unlawful callings.

Whatever is gained by these, is unjustly gotten. Some callings are unlawful in their nature; such are the curious arts of magic, astrology, and fortune-telling. Some are so in their tendency; such are all pursuits which proceed on the mere system of speculation. Some are so, because they involve disobedience to the Divine commands; such is the system of mere business travelling on the Sabbath day; whether of men, to save time, or of goods, to enhance profit.

#### 7. Idleness.

This is the parent of every vice, and the princi-

ple is the dishonest one of living on the gain of others. If any "walk disorderly, working not at all," and "provide not for his own, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."

8. Prodigality.

This consists in an extravagant expenditure beyond our real means; beyond what is consistent with the claims which may justly be made on us. It is plainly unjust in principle, and carries its condemnation along with it. "He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man; he that loveth wine and oil shall not be rich."

9. Gaming.

In all its forms and branches, Gaming is dishonest. It not only tempts Providence, and thereby breaks the third commandment, but it is unjust in principle, for it stakes a certainty for an uncertainty; and it is unjust to society, for it is calculated only to injure and defraud. The Cheating is an additional aggravation.

10. Contraband trade.

Smugglers, and the purchasers of contraband goods, alike act dishonestly towards the fair trader; and both transgress the command, "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers."

11. Refusal to enjoy the comforts of life.

"A man to whom God hath given riches, wealth, and honour, so that he wanteth nothing for his soul of all that he desireth," but who will not eat thereof, is dishonest to himself. "This is vanity, and an evil disease."

12. Listening to temptations to steal.

If a man say, I am alone, no one will see it;—

I am poor, I greatly need it ;—I have full opportunity, for here is abundance :—The thing is small, no one will care for it ;—the difficulty of detection would be great, for no direct proof could be adduced,—he has stolen already in his heart.

“ This is the curse that goeth forth over the whole earth ; for every one that stealeth shall be cut off according to it. I will bring it forth, saith the Lord of Hosts, and it shall enter into the house of the thief.” “ Consider this, ye that forget God ; lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.”

## THE NINTH COMMANDMENT.

---

EXODUS xx. 16.

“Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.”

WE have now before us the Law of Conversation. It assumes the interesting fact, that the Lord is a God of Truth, and requires truth among men. Truth in God is perfect. All his conceptions are in accordance with the real state of things; all his statements, promises, and threatenings are the sincere declarations of truth, and of his intentions and determinations; and the history of his government does now to a great extent, and will at length universally prove that he is faithful in all things. Truth is the essential basis of human intercourse. Without this there can be no confidence between men in any of their transactions and pursuits; it is essential to both the order and happiness of society.

Truth is of three kinds: Natural Truth, or the agreement between the conceptions of the mind and the reality of things;—Moral Truth, or the agreement between the thoughts of the mind, and the words of the lips;—and Practical Truth, or the agreement between the words of the lips



and the actions of the life. We shall endeavour to expound the commandment under these three divisions.

I. Natural Truth, which consists in correct knowledge, whether it be of abstract sentiments, or of positive facts. This command enjoins the pursuit of it, and forbids all transgressions against it.

1. It enjoins the pursuit of it ; for true statements cannot be made respecting either sentiments or facts, unless the truth be known. As it is plainly our duty to furnish correct or true statements, it must be equally our duty to obtain correct knowledge of those sentiments and facts on which we are required to speak. This coincidence between our sentiments, and the reality of things, is essential to our own satisfaction irrespective of all intercourse, and is of paramount importance as it regards the moral tendency of what we say. It involves the happiness of the circle in which we move, and is closely connected with the honour of God. The injunction requires ;—

The use of proper means to ascertain the truth. If the fairness, openness, and undisguised candour of intercourse be our object, we must seek the knowledge of the truth, by fair, open, and candid means. If Divine sentiments be the object to which our attention is directed, the truth is to be sought, not in creeds of human compilation, in formularies of human invention, in articles of human selection, or in assertions of human eloquence, but in the statements of Divine Reve-

lation, where God himself has shed his own light around us, that in his light we may see light. Who would use a lantern, that can walk in the light of the sun? Who would drink of the polluted stream, that can partake of the clear and springing fountain? Who would consult men that can listen to the voice of God?—If human sentiments be inquired into, they are to be sought at the first hand; from the living lip, or the written productions of the parties. For want of attention to this obvious duty, misrepresentations of human opinions abound on every hand, and often, alas! obtrude themselves into the sacred desk, and destroy the unity of the Church of Christ.—If matters of fact be the objects of inquiry, the parties involved, if we can gain access to them, should be first applied to. Eye or ear witnesses, if such there be, should next be inquired of. Reports at second or third hand are generally untrue, and will never be made by a man of truth the basis of opinion or statement. The idle gossiping from house to house, in which some contrive to squander so large a portion of infinitely valuable time, originates many a false impression; and, attempts to ascertain facts by sly and concealed inquiries, by listening to tales, or sifting parties who are supposed to have an indirect acquaintance with the case in point, are opposed to candour and prejudicial to truth.

Right motives are also necessary to the right pursuit of truth. The knowledge of Divine truth should be sought for its own sake; all motives are defective, and therefore guilty, which do not

aim at the Divine glory, and our personal salvation. Inferior motives warp the mind, bias the judgment, and tend to pervert the truth.—In endeavouring to ascertain human sentiments, simplicity of mind, right of inquiry, and purity of intention as to the use of the knowledge, are indispensable.—In reference to matters of fact, the idle curiosity, the unfriendly feeling, and the undue partiality which so often operate, are so many deviations from right motives.

2. It forbids all transgressions against Natural Truth.—

Our views and impressions may be false through wilful ignorance. If they who are voluntarily blind and deaf were dumb also, the mischief would be confined to themselves. But as they choose to speak, their ignorance is their sin.

False estimates of ourselves are inconsistent with the spirit of this command. Self-knowledge is difficult of attainment, but the cultivation of it should not therefore be neglected. Some under-rate themselves; but with the greater part, the contrary is the fact; “they think of themselves more highly than they ought to think;” and they speak and act accordingly. Query? Is not the forwardness of some professing Christians to tell of their inward conflicts and outward trials; the sacrifices they have made, and the duties they have performed, a breach of the law of truth?

Indolence in the attainment of religious truth is a transgression of this command. Where the means of knowledge are neglected error is sinful.

God has promised to aid by his Spirit all sincere endeavours to know his will, but idleness tendeth only to poverty in spiritual as well as in secular pursuits.

Judging the conduct of others from mere appearances is another breach of truth. We cannot see the conscience and the heart; "who art thou that judgest another man's servant?" A striking instance of this folly occurred in the island of Melita when Paul was shipwrecked: "A viper came out of the heat, and fastened on his hand. And they said, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live."

The imputation on slight grounds of motives to individuals, is as arrogant as it is common; and nothing is more false in principle. For if it should happen that our guess is right, it is but a guess; it proceeds on no stable foundation, and is guilty as a breach of this commandment.

Hypocrisy of conduct in order to deceive is one of the most foul and hideous transgressions of the whole law; but it is a direct breach of the law of truth.

II. The second kind of truth is Moral Truth, or the agreement between the words of the lips and the thoughts of the heart. This also is regulated by the ninth commandment.

1. It requires veracity, or the speaking of truth.

If we speak of Divine Truth, we should be firmly persuaded on due examination and evidence, that we speak "according to the oracles of God,"

and utter "the mind of the Spirit" in the Scriptures. Unstudied pulpit discourses are in great danger of error in this particular. Fanciful interpretations of God's word are almost sure to overlook the truth; and the practice of applying texts diversely from the spirit of their design in the connexion in which they stand, wilfully perverts the truth. All conversation on Divine subjects should display the deference of profound submission to inspired authority, and the most scrupulous care to speak only on conviction of truth.—In speaking of the opinions of men, we must state them as we verily believe them to be, without colouring, or any attempt to warp the judgment of others, either through partiality or prejudice. If we are ignorant, we should confess ourselves to be so.—In stating facts, any thing but Truth is inexcusable.—If we speak of ourselves, it should always be in measured accents of sober truth; and if of others, in guarded expressions of unimpeachable veracity.

More particularly this command requires that we speak the truth whenever we speak. "Putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour; for we are members one of another:"—that we never speak any thing but the truth, for "lying lips are an abomination to the Lord," and falsehood is not less abominable for being mixed up with a portion of truth;—that we speak the whole truth when it ought to be spoken; fully, without concealment; freely, without fear; clearly, without mincing or obscuring it; and sincerely, without any malice or partiality. "Sa-

muel told Eli every whit, and hid nothing from him," although the message was one full of evil tidings; and the guilt of disregard to this circumstance is most affectingly illustrated in the case of Ananias and Sapphira. They spoke the truth, but not the whole truth, and this, under circumstances which required that the whole truth should be spoken:—that we speak the truth after a proper manner. At proper times: for there is "a time to be silent," as well as a "time to speak;" and Solomon says, "Wisdom resteth in the heart of him that hath understanding, but that which is in the midst of fools is made known." The truth spoken must be proper to be spoken; not secrets; for thus saith the Lord, "Discover not a secret to another; lest he that heareth it put thee to shame, and thine infamy turn not away." Truth must be spoken in a proper spirit; not maliciously, as Doeg informed Saul of David's visit to Abimelech; but kindly, as Paul's sister's son informed the Governor of the plot of the Jews to ensnare him, and destroy Paul. It must be spoken too in proper language, and for proper ends. The language must be that of sobriety and purity, and the ends those of Christian charity, or social piety, or public utility.

2. It forbids Lying, Perjury, and Slander.

Lying, in all its forms, is forbidden by this precept. Unfounded statements are lies. If we speak that which we know to be untrue, or repeat that which we suppose may be false, or utter any thing with an intention to deceive, or make a statement on any point without due



examination, we break this commandment.—Partial statements are lies, if the case require that our neighbour should be put in possession of the whole truth, in order to form a full and correct judgment of it. To withhold part of the truth is to practise on him a foul deception, and to entail on ourselves the full guilt of all the errors into which he may in consequence be led. His omission to ask the necessary information is no palliation of our guilt in neglecting to impart it. Exaggerated statements are lies. Such are all additions to the naked truth ;—all highly wrought and coloured views of the truth ;—and all boasting pretensions, whether to superior origin, or great connexions, or personal acquisitions, or relative influence, or proposed performances.—Misstatements are lies ; *i.e.* when our words intentionally do not convey our meaning.—Evasive and equivocating statements are lies. This was the sin of Abraham and Isaac in calling their wives their sisters ; and of Ananias and Sapphira in speaking of the price for which they sold the land. Of this class of lies are the fashionable evasions of the day :—‘ Not at home,’ instead of ‘ Not at liberty,’ or, ‘ I don’t choose to appear ;’ ‘ Engaged,’ instead of ‘ I won’t come ;’ ‘ I don’t see company,’ instead of, ‘ I do not choose to see you,’ &c. To employ servants as the medium of this lying, is a high aggravation of its guilt, and their consenting to be so employed, is a virtual participation in the sin. No truly conscientious domestic would ever allow herself to act so base a part.—Misrepresentations

are lies; whether of Sacred Truth, which are often made by the wicked to prejudice others against it; or of human sentiments, which are sometimes given in overheated zeal; or of human testimony, as a false witness perverts that which has been spoken to serve a party; or of facts, which are daily set forth in opposite lights as the inclinations and caprices of men dictate.—Pleas of ignorance are another species of lies; they are constantly adopted to get rid of our neighbour's importunity when we are actually in possession of all the facts which are inquired after.—False professions of kindness and esteem are lies. Civility is one thing, fit to be professed, and practised by all, and it is required by the law of God towards all with whom we are called to associate; but professions of distinguishing respect and esteem are another thing, which, when not genuine, but designed merely to gratify and please, are a flagrant disregard to truth.—All flattery is downright lying; whether of a living man to his face, or couched in extravagant eulogy of the absent, or employed to delineate the character of the dead, or garnish the sepulchres of the righteous.—Mental reservation is a breach of truth; for one thing is thought in the heart, and another is expressed by the tongue. The plea that Subscription is a mere matter of course, and that oaths are the mere formalities of legal security or commercial transactions, will not bear the light. If the requirement of them be evil, the acquiescence is not less so.—Jesting partakes of the nature of lying. It is in the very nature of wit

to pun upon the truth, or present a double meaning. Besides, all do not know that we jest, and some may think us serious when we are altogether otherwise; and those who know us best will not always know when we are in earnest and when we trifle. Paul says, "Jesting is not convenient," and ranks it with those things which do not become the saints.—Harsh censures are almost sure to be false, to a certain degree, for they proceed from a bad spirit.—The employment of arguments which we know to be defective, is another species of lying. It is an attempt to conceal the truth, or to enfeeble its influence, or to make the worse appear the better reason. Even in friendly controversy, the practice of arguing on the wrong side is of very doubtful character.—Deception under the notion of a good end is another breach of moral truth. The practice of it in cases of illness, is nothing less than a presumptuous appeal to the Providence of God, and this to sanction our doing evil that good may come; and is often the most refined cruelty to the sufferer, who is deluded thereby on the very threshold of eternity.—Works of Fiction invade the rights of moral truth. Imagination usurps the place of the judgment, and men learn to live in the airy regions of fancy instead of mingling with the sober realities of life. This is true, even when no open vice is patronized, when no sneer is indulged at the sacred truth of God, nor any ridicule poured on the efforts of pious zeal. Religious novels are but novels still,

and their practical tendency is to foster crude conceptions of Divine truth, and a low tone of spiritual character. The good they effect is blazoned over the land, but the mischief they do, will be unknown until "the secrets of all hearts are made manifest."

Perjury is also forbidden by this law. In judicial proceedings, truth should make its most solemn appearances. All departure from it in courts and processes of law is here forbidden; whether by the Judges, who must not pass unjust sentences, for "he that condemneth the righteous, and he that justifieth the wicked are both an abomination to the Lord;"—by the Jury, who must not adopt a false decision. The law requiring unanimity of opinion on a case, is itself a vile infringement of the law of truth, and its alteration ought to be perseveringly sought by all who love the law of God, and desire the right administration of justice amongst men:—by the Complainer (the Plaintiff or Relater in a suit); who must not falsely accuse his neighbour by forging a lie against him, or suborning false witnesses, or in any way prejudicing his character, or seeking occasion against his estate:—by the Defender, who cannot innocently, before God, plead "Not Guilty," when he knows in his heart that the charge against him is true:—by the Witnesses, who are bound by a solemn oath to speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth:—by the Pleaders, who have no moral right to take up an unjust cause, knowing it to be

such, and still less to plead against the interests of truth and righteousness, to please a client and enrich themselves.

The command prohibits slander. We are not to slander ourselves. Some will accuse themselves of wickedness which they never committed, simply for the pleasure they have in boasting of mischief, and to gain the applause of their associates in crime. Some trumpet their own praise, and thereby betray their own folly; and some slander themselves under pretext of humility, and this is the vilest of all.—But especially, we are forbidden to slander others. This may be done by unfounded assumptions. We surmise that things are so, and then assert it. We conclude that such are men's motives, and then ascribe them to them.—Slander consists also in careless misconstructions. No innocence is safe against that temper which is always ready to give the worst turn to the words and actions of men, which they are capable to bear.—Unnecessary exposures are slander. "Charity covereth a multitude of sins."—Uncharitable aggravations are slander. An action may be bad. A statement of the truth may be necessary; but the aggravation of the evil by sly insinuations and unkind suspicions, is slander.—Of the same cast are illegitimate detractions; in which we withhold from our neighbour the praise that is his due.—Some are guilty of slander by the resurrection of forgotten circumstances;—by tale-bearing;—by mean listening to idle rumours;—by a ready repetition of evil reports;—by sly backbitings and whisperings;—by disadvantageous reflections;—



by unperceived insinuations;—by publishing calumnies in books; all are forbidden as malignant breaches of truth.

III. This command requires also practical truth, or a full correspondence between the words of the lips and the actions of the life.

Truth requires, that we promise that only which we intend to perform, and is violated when we fail to fulfil our promises. If, indeed, we are led to view our promises and engagements as sinful, it is right to repent of them and break them: it had been a far more holy thing for Herod to have broken his pledge, than to have fulfilled it when he found it involved him in the guilt of murder. If God should, by His Providence, render us unable to fulfil our intentions, there is no breach of practical truth in the neglect of them; and our promises are lawfully void, if they are made on the supposition of certain existing circumstances, in which we are deceived. In all other cases, we are bound to fulfil our engagements. “He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not,” “shall never be moved.”

It is equally necessary, that we promise only that which we are able to perform. Otherwise, we offend against moral truth in making the promise, and against practical truth in the breach of it. Promissory Notes, drawn in the mere hope of having means to meet the claim at the time when it becomes due, are breaches of practical truth which are a daily disgrace to British commercial enterprize. They are nothing better than forgeries, and have all the moral guilt.



The following are a few instances in which the importance of practical truth is very apparent. In the treatment of children. Scarcely is there any thing by which the legitimate influence of parents and teachers is more certainly sacrificed, than by carelessly promising or threatening what is never meant to be performed. Children justly expect to be treated with truth.—In the fulfilling of engagements, punctuality, as to time and place, is essential to truth. How many are guilty, in this respect, in their attendance on the public worship of God!—In the discharge of obligations. Debts are not always avoidable, but truth should be displayed in the time and circumstances of payment.—In the consistency of professions, and especially in religion. In common life, sincerity is invaluable in this respect, and affected manners are living falsehoods; but how much more guilty is insincerity in religion! Hypocrisy towards God is the vilest of all falsehood.—In the performance of pious vows. “Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give.” “Vow and pay unto the Lord thy God. It is better not to vow, than to vow and not pay.”

## THE TENTH COMMANDMENT.

---

EXODUS xx. 17.

“Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour’s.”

OUR attention is now called to that part of the law of God which proposes to regulate the feelings and desires of the heart, so that as exercised towards our neighbour, they shall not be offensive to either safety or purity, equity or kindness. Thus does the law itself, in the very letter of it, rebuke the folly of those who imagine, that it takes cognizance only of outward acts. It reacheth to the thoughts and intents of the heart; and whilst it forbids all inordinate desires towards our neighbour, and that which is his, requires such a state of mind as is prepared to obey this command.

I. Our first object will, therefore, be to depict the frame of mind which it requires. To fulfil this command, we must cultivate,

1. Holy indifference respecting worldly good.

Total indifference about worldly good, in the en-

joyment of which we may be respectable, useful, and happy, is sinful. So far from being totally indifferent, we are commanded to labour with our hands, to acquire that which is good;—to “provide things honest in the sight of all men;”—“to do good and to communicate,” which implies, that we have means beyond what is sufficient to maintain ourselves. The careless indifference which some affect on this point, is just as unholy as it is unnatural. That which is required is, a holy indifference respecting that particular measure of worldly good which falls to our share. It is opposed to a fretful, covetous, anxious concern about it. We must not set our hearts upon it, but be thoroughly weaned from it. It is thus enjoined, “If riches increase, set not your heart upon them;”—“Let not the rich man glory in his riches;”—“Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you;”—“Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth;”—“If any man come unto me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brothers and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.”—It is thus described: “Brethren, the time is short; it remaineth that both they that have wives, be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it; for the fashion of this world passeth away.”—David thus describes himself, as under its influence: “Surely, I have be-

haved and quieted myself as a child that is weaned of its mother ; my soul is even as a weaned child ;” and his history presents us with one of the most instructive instances of it. When he fled from the face of Absalom, he said unto Zadok, “ Carry back the ark of God into the city ; if I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and shew me both it, and his habitation. But if he thus say, I have no delight in thee ; behold, here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him.”

2. Full contentment with our own lot.

“ Every one is to look at his condition, as the paradise that God has set him down in ; and though it be planted with thorns and briers, he must not look over the hedge ; for thus it is written, “ Thou shalt not covet.” Though that which is wanting in our lot cannot be numbered, and that which is crooked cannot be made straight ; yet none of these things must render us uneasy and discontented. True Contentment requires, the hearty renunciation of our own will. “ Should it be according to thy mind ?” A contented mind will say, with the great Pattern of holiness, “ Not my will, but thine be done.” Our own will is to be renounced, both as to the kind and measure of comforts that God gives ; not coveting the fruit which he withholds or prohibits, but saying, with Paul, “ Having food and raiment, let us therewith be content.” To indulge our own will, is to expose ourselves to the doom of Israel, to whom God gave their hearts’ desire in his wrath, and destroyed them in the very enjoyment of it. “ They

that *will* be rich, fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.”—Contentment also implies, sincere acquiescence in the Will of God. David says, “Thou shalt choose our inheritance for us;” and Christ commands, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me.” We must submit to His will as just, without complaining; Micah said, “I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him:”—quietly, without murmuring, as Job, who, in all his afflictions, did not “charge God foolishly:”—with satisfaction and confidence; saying, with Habakkuk, “Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.”—Contentment still further implies, a complacency in our own condition, as that which is good and best, without desiring any change, but according to his will. Job displayed this complacency when he said, “The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.”—Aaron displayed it, when “he held his peace” at the stroke of the Lord;—Hezekiah, when he said, “Good is the word of the Lord;”—and Paul, when he exclaimed, “I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake.”

3. Moderation in all earthly enjoyments.

Thus we are commanded: "Let your moderation be known unto all men; the Lord is at hand;"—near, as to his presence, observing alike the use and the abuse of his providential distributions;—near, as to his government to bless the temperate enjoyment of his favours with new supplies;—near, as to his coming to judgment, to "render to every man according to his works."

4. A charitable temper towards our neighbour, and all that is his.

This includes, love to his person: "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love;" "He that loveth another, hath fulfilled the law:"—Respect and esteem for his relatives and connections, because they are his;—an upright regard to his property, for his sake;—a hearty desire of his welfare and prosperity, in all his pursuits, and this, however he may have injured or ill-treated us; the Saviour's command is, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them who despitefully use you and persecute you." A cordial delight in his welfare and sympathy with his distresses; "Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep:"—a tender solicitude over his reputation and character; "Speak evil of no man;"—and a readiness to distribute to his necessities; "Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?"

II. Having endeavoured to sketch the state of mind which this precept requires as the basis of



obedience to its injunctions, we proceed to specify some of the instances in which it is broken.

1. Discontent with our own estate, is a breach of this law.

This is seen in insubordination to the authority of God; as Pharaoh would not hear his voice, to let Israel go; he coveted the perpetuity of their services:—in the vexation of disappointed purpose; as Ahab went home to his house heavy and displeased, because Naboth would not give him the inheritance of his fathers, which he coveted:—in fretful anger; as Jonah said, “it is better for me to die than to live,” he desired the overthrow of the Ninevites:—in mortified pride; as Haman said, “All this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king’s gate;” he desired the destruction of the Jews:—in inordinate attachment to the creatures, or to worldly good; as Jonah grieved over the gourd, which sprang up in a night, and perished in a night; he was anxious to enjoy its continued shelter:—in unbelief; as Cain was wroth, and his countenance fell; he coveted acceptance, but would have it in his own way:—in ingratitude; as Hezekiah rendered not unto the Lord according to the benefit done unto him, for his heart was lifted up.

2. Disquietude at the good estate of our neighbour, is a further breach of this law.

This sometimes appears in sorrow and grief at his temporal prosperity; which seems to have been the feeling of Laban’s sons towards Jacob, when they said, “Jacob hath taken away all that was

our father's; and of that which was our father's, hath he gotten all this glory."—It appears, also, in contemptuous anger at official superiority; this was the feeling of Korah and his company towards Moses and Aaron, "Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord?"—Envy is another species of this disquietude. Joseph's brethren were envious at his enjoyment of their father's favour; and they sold him into Egypt.—Ambition of the honour of our neighbour, is another exhibition of this disquietude. Absalom was guilty here, when he desired the honour and throne of his father David.

3. Inordinate desire of that which is our neighbour's, is, under all circumstances, and in all its varieties, forbidden by this command.

Desires may be inordinate as to their object, when they have respect to unlawful things; that which is absolutely forbidden us, we may in no way desire: "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife." Or; though the things desired may be lawful, as a house, or a servant, or an ox, the desire may be unlawful as to the end at which it aims; "Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts." Or, desires may be inordinate, as to the means by which they seek to be gratified; for lawful enjoyments must not be sought by unlawful means. Or, they may be so as to the degree of their indulgence. Prudent care may be justified, and holy

desires indulged; but wearing anxiety, and envious wishes, are condemned.

There are "divers lusts," which they indulge who "live in malice and envy;"—there are "fleshly lusts," which war against the soul; "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life;"—there are spiritual lusts, or evil "desires of the mind," which they fulfil who walk "according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience;"—there are "deceitful lusts," which constitute the corruption of "the old man;"—there are "foolish and hurtful lusts," which, by grasping at worldly gain, "drown men in destruction and perdition;"—there are "youthful lusts," opposed to "righteousness, faith, charity, peace;"—there are "worldly lusts," which have nothing of heaven in them;—there are "ungodly lusts," which have nothing of piety in them;—there are warring and fighting lusts, which engender strifes;—there are insatiable lusts; eyes which are not satisfied with seeing, ears which are not satisfied with hearing, greedy consumers, which never say, It is enough; all these are forbidden by Him who says, "Thou shalt not covet."

The guilt of strong desire is sufficiently apparent. Its source is pride and selfishness; a corrupt and rebellious heart. Its spirit charges God with folly, injustice, and cruelty. It is the fountain or spring of all actual transgressions; "when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin, and sin when it is finished, bringeth forth death."

## CONCLUSION.

---

SUCH is the law of God. So much of its spirituality and extent our feeble understandings can perceive. But "the commandment is exceeding broad," and capable of detecting sin, where we have never discovered even a single trace of it. No man dares to plead that he has fulfilled the law. Every man confesses himself a sinner, when he is tried by this test. But every man does not so readily perceive that the law cannot justify him before God, and that he is shut up by the law of God, to the faith of the Gospel, without any alternative but everlasting death. Ponder, then, the following important considerations.

1. The condemnation which disobedience to the law involves. Its sentence is, "The soul that sinneth shall die;" and, "he that offendeth in one point, is guilty of all." But what is this penalty? It is an "everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;" in that place of "outer darkness," where there is "weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth;" "where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?"

2. The impossibility of justification by the law. The law is broken. Every sinner confesses his guilt under the law; how shall he then live by it? Its sentence cannot be rescinded, unless its claims can be satisfied; and its condemning curse is of the most stern and sweeping character. "Cursed is every man that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." The government of God is perfect. All His claims are just and unalterable; and this is His language on this point: "What things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore, by the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin." "If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe."

3. Consider the supreme prerogative of God to appoint the terms of life. Pressed with the burden of their guilt, men are full of devices as to the method of deliverance. One, hopes that his partial obedience will avail; another, relies on his repentance; a third, on his deeds of charity; a fourth, on his pious descent; a fifth, on his religious profession; a sixth, on his worldly reputation; a seventh, on his bodily sufferings; and others, again, on the mercy of God, viewed simply as mercy. But it does not occur to them to

ask, Has God promised life on these terms? There may be many devices in a man's heart; but he is in the hands of God who may justly condemn him, and whose sole prerogative it is to say whether he will shew mercy, and if he will, on what terms. He alone knows the desert of sin, and consequently on what ground alone it can be forgiven.

4. Hear then the word of the Lord; and mark the exclusive claims of the Gospel of Christ. "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." "Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that



believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. Beware, therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets; behold ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you."

5. "Do ye now believe?" Then, forget not that the law of God is to you "the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus;" and that after the example of Paul and in his spirit, you are bound to "press toward" it. To exhibit in the world a holy conformity to its precepts is to tread in the steps of the Lord Jesus, to commend his claims to those who still refuse to submit themselves unto him, to purchase unto yourselves "a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus," and to secure unto yourselves "the testimony of a good conscience," and the supports of an immortal hope. "Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord; that walketh in his ways."

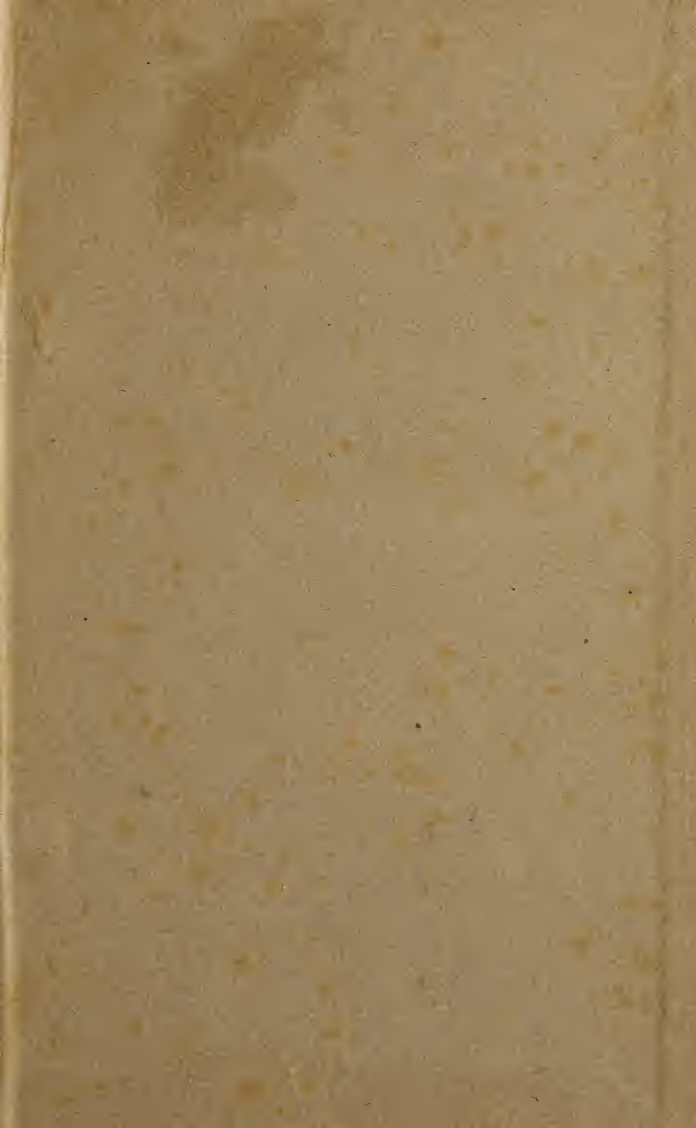
THE END.

A. G. HARDY, PRINTER,  
PLEASANT-ROW, ISLINGTON.

BV

4655





LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 020 517 216 6